



THE TUTORIAL IS TOO HARD

BOOK 01

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The Tutorial is Too Hard

(튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다)

by
Gandara

Synopsis

On a normal boring day.

A message appears, inviting him to a Tutorial.

A tale about Lee Ho Jae and his escape from Tutorial.

Who just happened to choose the hardest possible difficulty, Hell.

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Prologue

The Tutorial or This Tutorial ? :o

Life is a series of choices.

A phrase I once read in 3rd year of highschool.

Life truly is a series of choices.

But what the fuck am I supposed to do about it?

That phrase hasn't helped in any way for me to make better decisions on improving my life.

When I told that to my friend, my friend replied.

Your decisions can change the direction of your life. You will always have the opportunity to make choices as long as you walk the path of the living. What this means is that you should stop suffering over your past mistakes, and live while looking forward.

Bullshit. The bastard dares to say such stupid things even when he knows my situation.

Because of one foolish choice, my life was ruined.

There were plenty of excuses.

I was drunk.

Which is why I could not think straight.

When a strange hologram message invited me to somewhere, I just snickered.

I always loved novels and cartoons. I've dreamt of those fantasy-like events happening to me.

So, I became audacious.

[Will you enter the Tutorial world?]

Without hesitation, I answered Yes.

I was an ex-pro gamer. Damn it. This was the biggest problem. Because of that stupid sense of pride and need to boast. Full of confidence, I couldn't tell between game and reality.

[Choose the Tutorial difficulty. Depending on the difficulty, the dangers of the Tutorial stages increase along with the

growth rate and reward.]

The Tutorial's difficulty ranged between Easy, Normal, Hard and Hell.

Boldly, I chose the Hell difficulty.

Because of that stupid mistake, I'm still stuck here.

Chapter 1 - Tutorial Floor 60 (Part 1)

"I-can't stand it anymore~ Ooh ooh ooh~"

Before being summoned to the Tutorial world, I was walking through the residential district on the 60th floor singing a song that I heard from a movie.

It seemed like a sweet and romantic song in the movie, but when I sang it it sounded more like an elegy.

Anyone listening would have told me to stop singing at once. Truth is i'm tone deaf and beat deaf as well.

But I didn't stop.

I'm the only one here anyway.

The empty streets and the empty buildings reminded of the movie starring Will Smith, 'I am Legend'.

Other than my footsteps and my song, no other sound could be heard.

A dreadful silence.

At least Will Smith had a bitch of a dog with him. So jealous.

It was a bad choice by me. In the end, it is my responsibility to bear.

From the beginning, no almost the beginning, I was alone.

It wasn't surprising that I was alone in the residential district on Floor 30 as well,

but back then I wasn't tormented by the feelings of gloom and loneliness.

Back then I was moving forward although it was hard to the point of almost dying.

But now that I've reached Floor 60, I can't go forward anymore.

It's complicated, but to quickly summarise

It is impossible to clear the floor from 61 onwards alone. No matter what path you take.

Similar to the game 'Portal'. Just like their coop mission, it's a stage impossible to progress alone.

I needed a partner.

I went to my favorite pub.

Of course there's no bartender or other customers.

I sat on my usual seat and ordered a drink.

[300 points are deducted.]

I grab onto the glass which appeared on the table and flicked a coin off my thumb.

"Here's a tip, mister."

The coin spun through the air, hit the ground and rolled off somewhere.

[81st round will begin shortly.]

[Remaining time : 10 minutes]

Finally!

Every time a new round starts Players are forced into the Tutorial

stage.

Only those who are in residential districts are excluded, which I'm currently at.

There is only one reason for me, who was safely tucked away in the residential district, to anticipate for the new round.

When the new round begins, new Players enter. Please, let there be someone who will become my companion...

"Community open."

I may as well look at the community to waste the remaining time.

The first thing I see is...

[Difficulty Hell, Forum (1/1)]

What this means is, in the 'Hell difficulty' there is one survivor, and one person who is browsing the forums.

I move my eyes and look at the other forums.

Although it's called Hell forum, it doesn't mean that only Players

in Hell difficulty could use it. The forum is to talk about Hell difficulty and additionally show the population in the Hell difficulty.

[Difficulty Normal, Forum (42/86)]

So many. I'm jealous.

At that moment, a new post was made on the Hell forum.

[Lee Joon Suk, Floor 90 : Ho Jae-hyoung, sup. Are you waiting for a newbie?]

It's Lee Joon Suk, who is at Floor 90 in Hard difficulty. I usually stay in friendly terms with Hard Players. I became close with them as we shared our tips and how we raised our skill levels. The highest rankers of Hard difficulty could have information which can help me aswell.

Lee Joon Suk is someone who is currently grinding in the Tutorial world even though he has the opportunity to return to the real world once he advances through 10 more floors.

The Tutorial is made from Floor 1 to Floor 100 and Players who were able to reach Floor 100 are sent back to the real world.

And those Players who are strengthened through the Tutorial

become 'The Awakened' and protect the earth from monsters.

How the Awakened grow is not through experience or training but through level ups like in a game and they can no longer become stronger the moment they leave the Tutorial.

They may become more experienced and efficient, but that's the limit.

The evolution of their skills and growth of their stats simply become impossible.

It is the reason why Lee Joon Suk was grinding in the Tutorial. To become stronger before leaving the Tutorial. To return to reality as the strongest.

Well he's a nice guy for having a chat with me and I'm thankful and jealous as well.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : Yeah. Although I'm not sure if there will be one.]

I was a 1st round player. I came here without knowing anything. I didn't know where this was. Blindly choosing the Hell difficulty.

But the situation changed by the 15th round when a few people cleared Floor 100 and left the Tutorial.

Those who left the Tutorial told the world of its existence.

It was a good thing. Those that were still in the Tutorial were able to forward messages through the Players who cleared the 100th floor. Allowing them to tell their parents, their family and friends not to worry. Not to mention it gave them the hope of returning to real world if they could finish the tutorial.

Those in the real world gained information about the Tutorial which randomly kidnapped Players. Information like how to survive and what was dangerous.

That was the problem.

The dangers of the Hell difficulty was exposed.

Clear rate 0%, survival rate 0.01%.

Who would enter, unless they were incredibly insane.

Afterwards, the number of newbies entering Hell plummeted.

[Lee Joon Suk, Floor 90 : Hyoung, if there is a newbie, what would you want from them?]

An interesting question.

All this time I was hoping for someone to just come, rather than what kind of person would come.

Hmm...

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : Well gender and age doesn't matter.]

They grow stronger when their level grows whether they are women or children.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : But the most important factor is their mental strength.]

Those who enter Hell difficulty are nine times out of ten insane.

About half of them were people who should be in asylums. 'Patients' who couldn't think normally.

Of course their survival rate was 0%.

The other half are delinquents and school kids with chuunibyou full of empty boasts.

Their survival rate was 0.01%.

On a side note among the 3 categories, I was the chuunibyou.

Although I wasn't in school anymore. Shit.

Lastly are the misfortunate. For example, those who were summoned while riding a rollercoaster. Those who pressed Hell difficulty while they were waving their arms in the air.

Of course their survival rate was 0%.

Well if I were to rank them, it's Misfortunate > Chuunibyou > Delinquents > Insane.

[Lee Joon Suk, Floor 90 : I think the rank for delinquents is too low. Hmm... I don't get it. Hyoung, tell me why.]

I am kind therefore I gave an answer.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : Hell mode is fair to all. There is only 1 way for newbies to survive. Listening to what I say. That's it. So the rankings reflect the rank of those who will listen to me.]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : But that's not the most important factor. The most important factor is the Class.]

Class. The Class for RPGS.

Such as the warrior, mage, archer and priests.

Truth is, Classes are only mentioned by the Players.

To be accurate it meant the weapon they chose when they entered the Tutorial. From this starting weapon, their play style changes.

They can change their weapon half way, but most follow the style of their original weapon.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : Definitely a warrior. It has to be a shield warrior. You can't survive without a shield.]

[Jung Gi Joon, Floor 51 : But Ho Jae-hyoung doesn't use a shield.]

Jung Gi Joon. He is a Hard mode player just like Lee Joon Suk.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : I did use it. Back then ...]

Suddenly, the topic of the conversation became the tales of my adventures.

As I talked about my past, we came to my early days in the Tutorial.

The beginnings in the Hell difficulty.

Whether there were many who were curious or there were

simply a lot of people browsing the Community due to the start of 81st round, a lot of people gathered at this forum.

Then, a new name posted on the forum.

[Jung Won Sik, Floor 33 : Even so, aren't you just a loser? There's no way you can clear Hell mode anyway. Why do you guys like him so much?]

I froze as soon as I read those words.

[Goo Dae Ho, Floor 53 : That retard lololol. He sure got balls for an Easy player lol.]

Easy mode. If it's Easy difficulty, it's likely he hasn't been in the Tutorial for long despite being on Floor 33. The clear speed for Easy difficulty is very fast.

I massaged the tension on the back of my neck, and continued to write.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : I remembered your name. I don't know how many years it will take, but when I'm out I'll find you first.]

These weren't empty threats. When I leave, I'll find him.

But he won't be first, unlike how I've written it.

There are 7 more I must visit before him.

The bastard Jung Won Sik didn't post anymore.

[Jung Gi Joon, Floor 51 : By the way hyoung, what's your level now?]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : 251]

A series of comments explode after those words.

[Lee Joon Suk, Floor 90 : 251? Hyoung went over 200? Why's it so high?]

[Goo Dae Ho, Floor 53 : Level 251 kek lolololololol Are you human? lololololol.]

[Lee Won Ill, Floor 17 : Lolololol that guy before must be shitting his pants lolololol pissed off a level 251 lolol.]

Anyway this world is a tutorial. It's not a death game aimed at killing people.

Its aim is for Players to grow. It's just the person who chooses Hell is at fault. Fuck.

The system clearly said that danger increased along with

difficulty. And that the growth rate and reward increased accordingly as well.

The system is true. That's it.

After reading the comments, my anger subsided a little.

I am petty and childish, I know.

And I always remember my grudges. I'll never forget.

I open the memo on System and write down the name Jung Won Sik.

[81st Round will begin.]

The system message that I had been waiting for finally popped. I quietly closed my eyes.

Please let there be a newbie...

I began to pray. Similar to praying for an item enchant to succeed in an RPG.

I can feel the heart pounding, probably from my desperation.

Please... Please...

And with those desperate feelings, I slowly open my eyes.

[Difficulty Hell, forum (1/2)]

IT'S HERE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Chapter 2 - Tutorial Floor 60 (Part 2)

In 2014, a strange event swept across the globe.

Monsters appeared from all over the world, and began to attack towns and cities.

Most of the monsters were neutralized by the military, but there were a select few that were able to survive as they were immune to bullets.

Many cities across the world were destroyed, and the number of casualties were innumerable.

It was then when the psychics known as the Awakened appeared.

Once every month, people were randomly kidnapped into the Tutorial world. If they were able to clear the Tutorial, they would receive powers and were returned to the real world.

[Round 81 will begin.]

It had been 30 days since Round 80 had started and now was time for Round 81 to begin.

As usual, 100 new players were kidnapped.

[Difficulty Normal, Forum (71/106)]

[Welcome newcomers.]

[Must-know tips before you beginning the Tutorial.]

[Basic introductions for Tutorial classes.]

[Basic rules for the community waiting room. Newbies please read.]

[System interface configuration.]

[Punishment for breaking the rules.]

Such topics could be found and more are posted on the forums.

Most of the posts were uploaded by the NPCs in the residential districts.

Residential NPCs were Players who had given up on progressing through the Tutorial. They had chosen to settle themselves in the residential districts located on Floors 30, 60 and 90.

They give advice to first time Newbies and maintain public order in the residential areas.

I might become one of these NPCs too.

Afterall, I can't get past Floor 60.

And...

[Difficulty Hell, Forum (1/2)]

It's here! A Newbie!

How long have I waited for the number '2' to appear.

I'm about to cry.

Please, come on the Community. Please...

Please... Someone normal... Please...

[Difficulty Hell, Forum (2/2)]

They're here!

I had to make a post quickly, so the Newbie could see it.

At that moment, a new post was made on the Hell forum.

[Uhh...]

[Lee Yeon Hee, Floor 1 : Uh... am I in Hell difficulty
sdalkhfiuoqrg. I think I pressed the wrong button. Please help me.
HELP MEDSKLFJGLKG]

I can feel her sanity crumble with each passing word.

It may have been the greatest misfortune in her life, but for me it
was my only ray of hope! Hoorray!

Meanwhile, the Newbie's post received enormous attention.

[Lee Joon Suk, Floor 90 : Uh... Hm, I. Uh... Cheer up.]

[Lee Gi Suk, Floor 22 : Ah... mistakes were made. You misclicked
and now you're in hell. FeelsBadMan.]

[Goo Dae Ho, Floor 53 : Uwaa lolololol. Press the wrong button
and into Hell you go lololol.]

[Lee Won Ill, Floor 17 : Cheer up. The survival rate isn't 0%, it's just 0.01% kek.]

[Jung Gi Joon, Floor 51 : Don't make fun of her you assholes. How sad would she be right now.]

I quickly added a comment before the Newbie Lee Yeon Hee's sanity could shatter into a million pieces.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : Don't be so scared. If you listen to me, you can survive. Calm down.]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : I'm sorry, but can you introduce yourself quick?]

I have to know her age at least.

There is no age limit for those who are sent here.

Which means that even a 100 year old grandma or a 5 year old kid could be sent here.

[Lee Yeon Hee, Floor 1 : Hello, my name is Lee Yeon Hee. I'm 20 years old. My school...]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : You can forgo details like your school. What weapon did you start with?]

[Lee Yeon Hee, Floor 1 : Bow.]

She's screwed.

[Lee Gi Suk, Floor 22 : Archer, LOL. Pretty sure even Robin Hood couldn't beat Hell difficulty.]

[Lee Won Ill, Floor 17 : What gave you the idea to pick the bow in Hell..T_T]

I thought the Newbie would of had a major breakdown completely if she read the comments so I sent her a 1:1 chat invitation.

[Lee Yeon Hee has entered.]

[Lee Yeon Hee : Is the bow really that bad? I heard it's good in the early stages?]

A question as soon as she enters.

Well, her life depends on it. I should understand.

The bow is a very difficult weapon for beginners.

Unless you practice archery....

[Lee Yeon Hee : I am an archer. A national represent.]

Ah, is that so...

Those who start with the bow are often called Archers.

In the Tutorial, the Archer is a class which does not simply fire arrows from afar like other RPG games.

In terms of combat, rather than being a sniper who shoots from afar, they are more like a ranger who sweeps through the battle like Legolas.

It was dangerous, but everyone's forced to play Solo during the beginning, so as they progress through the Tutorial with a bow, they naturally developed such skills from difficult close quarters combat that occurred frequently.

As they go past the start, they begin to form parties,

These Archers become core members of the party due to their agility, survival and offer great utility such as excellent eyesight.

To make it brief, they are like the amalgamation of a rogue, adventurer and archer from a normal RPG game.

Everyone is recommended to have to have at least 1 archer in their party due to them being multi-skilled and the ability to survive.

So, Lee Yeon Hee is correct about how good it is in the early phase. It's dangerous on the first 5 floors where the Start of the Tutorial lies, but it's not a bad weapon for Floors 20 and below which is considered the early phase.

But, that's not the same for Hell difficulty.

Because it's so hard to go past the first 5 floors.

[Lee Ho Jae : Archer is not a bad choice. Don't worry. In truth, Archers are one of the best surviving classes.

[Lee Yeon Hee : Really?]

[Lee Ho Jae : Yes. So don't worry, follow my instructions and you'll survive. Don't believe anyone else and just follow my advice.]

After calming down Lee Yeon Hee, I explained about the basics of Tutorial. How to use the Shop and Community. How to gain and raise Skills.

[Lee Yeon Hee : Uh, is it really alright? Will I survive?

[Lee Ho Jae : You will survive if you follow my instructions. Not anyone else, but mine. Ah, did you ever hear about me?]

I asked as I repeated what I said before.

It's embarrassing to say it myself, but I am quite famous. Both inside and outside the Tutorial.

I am the lone survivor in Hell difficulty in Korea.

And also the highest ranking Hell Player in the world.

Apparently I'm a famous urban legend in the real world.

[Lee Yeon Hee : Yes. Uh, the lone survivor of Hell... Right?]

[Lee Ho Jae : Yes. That's right but I'm not exactly alone. There are plenty of survivors in Hell on other different servers too.]

Apparently there are 11 survivors in the American server. Crazy bastards.

Most of them are stuck in the residential area of Floor 30, but it's still impressive to have more than 10 Players.

What's even more surprising is that there are still people challenging the Hell difficulty.

I wasn't aware that America was so Macho-tastic.

[Lee Yeon Hee : Uh, this may sound rude but, what's the highest record for Hell difficulty?]

[Lee Ho Jae : Floor 60 which is where I'm at.]

It felt embarrassing yet proud when I complimented myself.

[Lee Yeon Hee : Can you tell me what the records are for Players other than yourself?]

I thought briefly before I could answer. Should I tell her the truth, or hide it.

On the side note, the highest in Korea is Floor 17, while the World record is Floor 32.

[Lee Ho Jae : There are a quite a number of people who got past Floor 30. It's a lot if you consider the fact that there aren't many who enter Hell difficulty to begin with.]

[Lee Ho Jae : Most importantly, there's a residential area on Floor 30. If you get there, you won't have to worry about dying.]

Of course Lee Yeon Hee cannot remain on Floor 30. She had to come up to Floor 60 and help me clear Floor 61.

Anyway, I carefully chose words that would help her regain her calm.

However, I'm not sure how effective that was.

[Lee Ho Jae : Well then, I'll give you a detailed explanation about the start of Tutorial, Floor 1.]

Now I needed to drill her about the pattern and tips on how to get through the start.

The Hell Tutorial had sent countless lives to their doom, but it wasn't impossible to beat.

The most effect path was to memorize the order and pattern of the Tutorial.

The Tutorial is fair.

It brings equal challenges to all.

In the same order and pattern.

Before I started my explanation, I began to remember the days.

The days when I first fell into this hell.

Chapter 3 - Tutorial 1st Floor, Waiting Room (Part 1)

[One to your shoulder, heart and between your eyes. Half a beat later right ankle. Simple right?]

[What happens if you can't dodge it? Um... It's alright. Everyone's like that the first time.]

I switched through the TV channels with empty eyes.

Comedy shows were boring, and the dramas were ever so predictable.

Music shows were absolutely trash.

I was in desperate need of some sort of stimuli.

A normal day, boring and stupid.

This has been going on for 2 years.

I've quit my career as a professional gamer 2 years ago and have since set up a convenience store with my savings.

It was challenging at first with so many things to manage, but I got used to it fast. And once I got used to it, I left it all to my part

time employees and holed myself at home.

Who cares if the part timers rip some money off me.

Life was boring.

I should't have quit my pro gaming career.

I was the best when it came to video games.

There may be arguments, but at my greatest height I was called the best.

However, with the passing of time I was eventually deposed of that title. Unable to deal with my loss, I decided to retire a short time after.

Rather than live on as a loser, I had decided to quit gaming completely.

I've always been extremely competitive.

From hide and seek to a local soccer match, once I started to play, I had to win.

Then one day, I played a fighting video game for the first time in front of a local stationary store.

How angry was I, after being completely destroyed by a 6th grader.

That's when I was absorbed into gaming.

Until my retirement 2 years ago, gaming was my life.

What would it be like if I stayed as an ex-best gamer?

That life wouldn't have been as bad as this.

My life right now is unbearably empty and boring.

Well, what could I do. What's done is done.

I sigh as I raise a glass of soju. The glass was empty.

I try to look for another bottle in the black plastic bag as I keep muttering shit.

Ah, have I drink them all already...

At that moment, an emergency broadcast was being played on the TV.

[... Just 30 minutes ago, multiple sinkholes such as these have suddenly appeared throughout the world. The government is currently investigating the cause to the sinkholes.... It has been advised not to approach near these sinkholes. This is NBS news update...]

It was a strange news update. But I was facing an even peculiar situation at that moment.

Floated words appeared in front of my eyes.

[Congratulations, you have been invited to the Tutorial World. Lee Ho Jae.]

Tutorial? Is it the tutorial, where they show you the basics of the game?

Am I wasted to the point of seeing hallucination, or have I gone insane.

[Will you enter the Tutorial World?]

I quickly began to contemplate whether this is an opportunity for me or not.

I had no regrets about my life. If anyone could give me a new life, I'd welcome it with both arms open.

It's something that would happen in an anime or a novel, but I am seeing that possibility right in front of me.

Can I lead the life I want in the new world? Where I'm the protagonist again?

"... Yes."

An answered crept out of my dry throat. Is this ok as an answer?

The message changed after my reply.

[Please select the difficulty. The dangers of the stage increase with difficulty, along with its rewards and your growth.]

There were 4 options.

Easy, Normal, Hard, Hell.

There was no need for me to think.

I, Lee Ho Jae.

Have never missed out on a game, and have never been called bad in any of them.

I am confident that I can be at least above average in terms of sports, and I was filled with talent for games. A so called genius.

And so I chose Hell difficulty.

And then proceeded to lose my consciousness.

A rough shake woke me up.

‘Hey, are you awake? You’ve slept for long enough, get up.’

An intimidating looking man was shaking me to get up.

‘Are you coming to your senses? Are you ok?’

I forced my tired eyes open to look at my surroundings. I saw 3 people including the man who woke me up. All of them, people that I’ve never seen before.

‘Fuck... who, who are you!’

I shouted as I stumbled backwards.

This wasn't my room.

The floor and walls were lined with clean-cut stone that seemed like marble.

It was a desolate indoor space with no furniture.

'Where... where am I?'

As I opened my eyes, I was in a strange place with unfamiliar people.

'This is the 1st floor waiting room.'

'1st floor waiting room? What do...'

'Hey, calm down. Let's have a chat. Did you not see those messages?'

The man who shook me spoke with a calm tone. His face was like a rugged bear, but his voice was like a ballad singer.

'A message?'

'You know, the messages regarding something about a tutorial.'

At that moment I remembered what happened before I lost my consciousness.

Is this it? Is this like teleportation? Did I enter the game world?

My head was full of questions.

‘I saw it. I was drunk, everything was so hectic. Did all of you see the message and did it all lead you to come here?’

My voice was surprisingly calm and clear. Before I lost consciousness, I swear I was drunk to the absolute limit.

‘Yes.’

The man passively replied, and the man and woman behind him nodded in agreement.

‘I wanted to know if you knew anything about this whole situation, hence why I woke you up. You probably got dragged here without knowing anything like us. Anyway, it's only us here so shouldn't we help each other?’

Mm...

Not a bad idea. Having allies is definitely better than being alone.

But only if I could trust these people.

‘Would you happen to have any leads about this entire situation?’

‘Well, come to think of it, before the messages started popping up, there was an emergency news report.’

The whole group of people paid their full attention to me as I said this.

Not only just the man I spoke to, the man and woman behind him approached me.

‘It said a large sinkhole had appeared across the whole world out of nowhere.’

‘Are you saying we ended up in here because of the sinkhole that appeared?!’

The ugly man at the back raised his voice.

He looked like a gangster.

‘Fucking, do you think that even makes any sense, you retard?’

Mm. The gangster could be right. Maybe he was also a little too anxious about this whole situation, it was quite a touchy response.

‘I just told you what I remembered.’

Luckily, it seemed the ganster didn’t want to dig into me anymore. At least he isn’t completely braindead.

I shook my head a little. Something’s a little...

‘What is it?’

‘No... just. Before I lost consciousness I was completely drunk, I feel as though I’m just a little too normal.’

‘Ahh. It must be because of that thing. Apparently, if you enter this area your whole body gets healed. It must be it.’

‘What?? The body heals by itself?’

‘Yes. A message saying that appeared just before you woke up.’

Another Message.

I feel as though I missed out on something important.

‘I’m sorry but can you tell me the details of that message?’

‘ok’

‘Firstly, I will tell you about the very first message that appeared.’

‘Thank you’

The man who looked like a bear was surprisingly nice. I wonder, how old was he?

The man first told me about beginner weapons. As soon as I heard that from the man, in my field of vision a little message appeared which instructed me to choose a starting weapon.

As I focused on the message, everything went black.

The next moment, I was in an area with countless amounts of weapons which spanned around my surroundings.

It wasn't the stone chamber I was in before. The people had also disappeared.

What kind of balance was this...

Lets calm down. If I thought of this as a game, there was nothing weird happening at all.

I calmed myself and looked around.

There were various different kinds of weapons around me.

A spear, sword, bow, iron mace, that... mmm.. thing. There were also weapons that I couldn't figure out how to use as well.

Is that even a weapon? It just looked like a plain hammer.

The bow came with a quiver and a bunch of arrows. It must of been given as a set item.

As you play a game, there are times where you had to make a decision.

The decision could affect me greatly in the future that is to come, so I had to chose with discretion.

Mmm... A moment of deep thought had come.

Now, what should I choose?

Chapter 4 - Tutorial 1st Floor, Waiting Room (Part 2)

Countless weapons spanned across my surroundings.

They looked like the typical beginner class weapons.

Most of them didn't even have accessories and just looked unadorned.

It was no doubt that they were made just for practicality.

Which one should I pick?

First, let's think about my stats.

Height: 177cm. Weight: 71kg.

I used to have quite a skinny physique, but I gained quite a bit of weight while staying home doing absolutely nothing.

Due to the lack of my muscle strength, swinging heavy weapons would be hard.

I was pretty confident when it came to fitness.

I was skilled at sports in general, this was probably attributed to the fact that I had good hand-to-eye coordination.

However still, I was most confident when it came to playing video games.

I never really practiced martial arts for long.

When I was young, I only went to a Wushu dojo, though it only lasted for a short period of time.

And during my time in secondary school I tried a bit of Kendo.

It would be best if I didn't rely on either Wushu, Kendo or martial arts in general.

Out of all the available weapons, the staff caught my eye.

It wasn't a paddle-like staff that was used like a club, it was more of a magical staff that even Gandalf would probably carry around himself.

Well, I didn't know if it was a real magical staff but it sure looked like one.

If I chose that, would I become a mage or a priest?

I might have to learn skills completely independent of the staff too.

Just as I imagined, melee weapons would be better.

Having a ranged weapon definitely had the advantage of safety in terms of staying at a safe distance in battle. However, that would only apply if I had someone protecting me.

Moreover, if I think about the people I had met in this area, the decision to choose a melee weapon is even more appealing.

Sticking a blade into someone's face definitely has a different type of pressure compared to sticking a staff in someone's face.

It would also probably be wise if I stayed on good terms with the people back in the stone chamber, but I also had to take into account when things could go bad between us.

With the exception of the bow and staff, every other ranged weapon should be disregarded.

With the same reason, I should stay clear from blunt weapons like clubs.

They weren't sharp and intimidating like a sword was.

Overall, they were too heavy.

After I took everything into consideration, the only weapons that would be viable for me were the likes of spear, sword and axe, and so on.

There were many variants of the same weapons, except for the axe.

Although there were a few axes that weren't too heavy, I just didn't like them.

The only ones left were the sword and spear.

Normally, people would think that the spear had the advantage of reach and would be easier to use effectively, but in reality this was not the case.

The spear was an advanced weapon that a beginner wouldn't likely be able to wield it efficiently.

Basically, the spear would be stronger than the sword if the person wielding the spear kept their distance.

In other words, the spear would be hard to use effectively if this distance was to be closed by the enemy.

Perhaps if I had other spear wielding allies by my side, to form a

nice scrum it might make it effective.

I don't know what type of enemies I might encounter... no, actually I don't even know if I'll encounter any enemies, but if they were stronger, faster and more precise, using a spear would be problematic.

I'm only a beginner and an ordinary person too.

Although using a sword is honestly challenging for a beginner, if I continue to doubt my own thoughts I'll end up hypothesising forever.

I trusted my own decision and began looking for a sword that would fit me.

I lifted a longsword and it was much heavier than I expected.

I swung it with all my might and it felt like my body was actually being pushed away by its weight.

From this experience, I decided to disregard all two-handed swords.

Once I found a decent sized one-handed sword, I found multiple with a shield, like a set.

Ah, the sword and shield combo.

There were more than twenty sets, however they all had one thing in common.

They came with a catch, a penalty.

The swords and shields were in poor condition compared to the swords and shields that were available by themselves. The shields in the sets were much thinner and some were even rusted. The swords were also either shorter or thinner.

Moreover, some were rusted and even chipped.

Should I give up the sword and choose a shield instead?

Just becoming a tanker from the start could be an option too.

I pondered for a moment but soon disregarded that thought.

No matter what, even in doubt, it was essential for me to have a weapon.

I wasn't sure if I would be able stay with the people back at the stone chamber.

Even if could, I couldn't trust them just yet.

After scavenging for hours, I finally decided on my weapons.

A round shield that could be strapped around my arm and a sturdy one-handed sword roughly 40cm in length.

The sword looked pretty similar to a gladius used in ancient roman times.

The shield was made of wood and the surface was lined with leather. I liked that there was a handle and also a leather belt that allowed it to be strapped around my arm.

Like other swords found in sets, the sword I chose had multiple chips on the blade. Out of anxiety, I chose a sword that was short and sturdy so it wouldn't break easily.

[Dirty Shield]

Defence: 4

Description: Separate from the handle, a leather belt is attached. The belt is more valuable than the shield. Second-hand.

[Thrown away training sword]

Attack: 3

Description: A training sword once used by a kid. Second-hand.

These descriptions were absolutely worthless. Why did they have to explain to me that the items are second-hand anyway? Although all the basic weapons here had these types of descriptions, maybe it was the penalty for choosing a set. The condition of these items were really poor.

[Will you choose this?]

A message popped up.

“Yes.”

The next moment I was back in the stone chamber.

“Welcome back. Did you choose your weapon?”

A man that resembled a bear questioned instantly upon my return.

“Yes.”

“I see you’ve chosen a sword and shield set. Nice choice”

“What?!”

The gangster shouted from afar

“How come you brought two things? What are you?!”

“This sword and shield came in a set. Even though they come together, they lack in quality compared to the swords and shields that were available by themselves.”

The gangster couldn’t accept my explanation and complained for hours.

The bear man confronted him and told the gangster that he himself saw the set weapons, which allowed us to barely calm him down.

The bear man taught me about the inventory and status bars and also how to use the Community feature.

“Inventory.”

As I quietly muttered this, my inventory appeared right in front

of my eyes.

Inside my inventory were dried foods and water. I should check how much I have of those later.

At the thought about disarming my sword and shield and storing them in the inventory, the weapons I held in my hands slowly disappeared and appeared in my inventory.

Now I thought of re-arming myself, the weapons appeared in my hands again.

Now this really felt like a game.

“Status.”

Lee Ho Jae (Human)

Strength: 8

Dexterity: 13

Endurance: 10

Intelligence: 21

The status bar was so neat and tidy that it was so insignificant.

Surely there would be something more.

Like the main character in a story, I expected some special powers or something of the sort but it seemed like I was the very definition of the word human.

My intelligence could be quite high compared to others though. No wonder the staff was so tempting.

“The inventory and status bars are pretty simple to understand, but what’s this Community feature?”

“Mmm, it’s like a social media network. You can use this to chat to different people in different chat rooms. Other than that I don’t think it has any other feature.”

“Other chat rooms?”

I was so curious about this community feature that I had to open it.

[Difficulty: Easy, Forum (33/61)]

[Difficulty: Normal, Forum (7/24)]

[Difficulty: Hard, Forum (11/16)]

[Difficulty: Hell, Forum (1/4)]

“It’s separated by difficulty.”

“Yeah, and it’s only the four of us that chose the Hell difficulty. Since it’s like this, shouldn’t we combine forces and work together?”

“Right.”

“Lastly, the clock. If you think about wanting to see the time, it will automatically appear in your vision.”

Just like he said, I thought about wanting to see the time.

[Attempt 1, Day 0. 1:13pm]

[Time left until Tutorial: 70 Hours 43 minutes]

“Come here, we should introduce ourselves to each other and have a talk.”

Chapter 5 - Tutorial 1st Floor, Waiting Room (Part 3)

[Attempt 1, Day 0. 1:28pm]

[Time left until Tutorial: 70 hours 32 minutes]

We sat in the centre of the stone chamber, the 1st floor waiting room and proceeded to introduce ourselves.

The bear-man who explained everything to me before was the first person to introduce himself.

The bear-man's name was Choi Min Sik.

He was 47 years old.

Your average working man.

He was pondering on whether he should resign from his job when the message suddenly appeared before his eyes.

A special quality of his was that he was in the athletics team in high school.

Next was the short tempered rebel. His name was Cho Kyung Min.

He was 31 years old.

It was befitting to call him a gangster.

A special quality of his was that he really liked Korean RPG games like Lineage.

The only woman on the first floor, Park Su Ah, was next.

She was 21 years old.

A tertiary student.

She really liked Japanese anime.

“I’m Lee Ho Jae. I’m 26 years old and I was a pro-gamer.”

“Pro-gamer? Lineage?”

Kyung Min asked with delight.

Were there even pro-gamers in Lineage?

“No. I was a pro-gamer in the RTS category. When I was young I learned to play many sports including kendo hence I’m also quite confident in my athletic abilities.”

“Well, now that we know more about each other, how about discussing what is about to come?”

Min Sik began to speak.

However, we managed to only mutter to ourselves and as we tried to read our current predicament.

This was bound to happen since no one knew anything about each other. I guess it was up to me to man up and start the conversation.

“Well firstly, I believe that we all share the same understanding that this place is similar to a game, right?”

The other three agreed.

“They give you weapons, even a character status bar. It definitely resembles an RPG game. It’s kind of like Lineage, the game you like, Kyung Min.”

“Yeah, it’s really similar.”

Kyung Min loudly agreed with his voice.

“One of the most important things about RPG games is team play. In a party, we all get assigned a role and play as a team. So, let’s all show each other what type of weapons we have chosen so we can assign these roles to each other.’

All four of us opened our inventories simultaneously and laid out our weapons.

Min Sik had a large trident.

The pole was wide and the blade was large also.

It was incredibly heavy.

It seemed to be roughly 2metres in length, a weapon that looked like it should be wielded by Guan Yu or Zhang Fei from the Romance of the 3 Kingdoms.

Kyung Min chose an axe. The blade was a little larger than a fire axe.

However, the long metal handle made it seem easy to use.

I thought I had seen this kind of weapon somewhere, then I realised, it oddly shared the looks of an axe that a dwarf would have used in The Lord of the Rings.

Including me, 3 of us had chosen a melee weapon.

Deep inside, I had hoped that Su Ah had chosen a ranged weapon. A bow, throwing weapon or maybe even a mage staff.

However, Su Ah had taken out a long katana instead.

It looked much larger than a normal katana.

Simply said, it looked like it was from an anime.

My god, how is she going to use that...

What are you, some sort of shinigami?

All four of us had chosen a melee weapon. The combination was a little off-point.

While Min Sik and Kyung Min argued over whose weapon was better, I cleared my thoughts.

“I have an idea. Please listen.”

The formation I thought of was this.

Kyung Min and I at the front.

Since I have the shield, I would stay slightly ahead of Kyung Min to block front on attacks so he could attack with his axe.

Min Sik at the back

With Min Sik at the back, he should be able to pierce enemies in sight between Kyung Min and I.

Lastly Su Ah has a free-role.

The katana was significantly long. Compared to Su Ah's physique, it was too heavy so, she would have to use it as a two-handed sword. This is way too dangerous for a beginner to use.

Su Ah would cover Min Sik's sides and read the battle. Moreover if Kyung Min or I get hurt/ if people are out of position, Su Ah would come to support and attack only if there is a sure-fire chance.

"So, what do you think?"

Min Sik and Kyung Min agreed to my proposed positions.

Min Sik seemed relieved that he was a bit safer one step back and Kyung Min was happy that he was the main damage dealer in the group.

However, Su Ah didn't like the idea.

In all honesty, I thought that Su Ah would like this position the most since it was the safest position out of them all. It really surprised me when she displayed her dissatisfaction.

“Su Ah. I understand how you feel, but I think you should consider Ho Jae's suggestion.

I understand that this may feel like a game to you, however we don't know if we can get hurt or even die like a game. Moreover, we chose the hardest difficulty. We don't know the dangers ahead of us and if we don't have any other solid suggestions I believe we should follow Ho Jae's safe and stable positions.”

Min Sik calmly tried to convincing Su Ah.

Although Su Ah's expression hadn't changed, she nodded her head in agreement.

Then, we began our group training.

No matter how far we went, we were in an area where we weren't able to get hurt, tired or even hungry. This was the perfect place to train.

Firstly, we began by getting into the positions I suggested.

Kyung Min and I at the front, with me slightly ahead of Kyung Min and Min Sik right behind us.

It was crucial to not get in Min Sik's way.

We couldn't stay too close, nor too far away from each other.

After multiple adjustments, we finally found the right distance we had to keep.

At this stage we just swung our weapons like madmen as a trial.

"This should be enough."

Kyung Min's words were reasonable and we were a little jaded to continue.

And so we stopped swinging our weapons.

Shortly after, we began to spar.

I was worried our weapons would get damaged as we trained, but fortunately, this wasn't the case.

There were moments where our weapons would get damaged, however the weapons would repair themselves to their original state soon after.

Not only did the waiting room heal us, it also repaired our equipment automatically.

Although we were in the waiting room where injuries could not occur, when we sparred, we didn't train with the aim of inflicting major injuries upon one another.

We all lived a peaceful life until yesterday.

We weren't prepared to fight to draw blood, even though we were in the waiting room.

Despite that, we did make improvements.

Kyung Min would swing his axe and I would block it with my shield.

We trained vigorously, full of concentration.

If I there was an opening, I also swung my sword.

To deny the opportunity of a counter-attack, Kyung Min naturally learned to swing his axe with efficient movements. Allowing it to be swung with more precision.

Min Sik was trying to get a hang of using the large trident.

The trident was too heavy; it couldn't be used in a fancy way like you see in those Chinese martial art films. You could only use the weight as an advantage for a forceful stab.

Fortunately, the formation protected our backside well, an attack from there was unlikely..

Su Ah was quite a problem.

Due to how large it was, she was barely able to swing her katana properly.

It was more like uncontrolled waving in the air.

She still had yet to win a match when we sparred with her.

I could beat her easily even without my sword.

I didn't expect anything better from her, so I wasn't too disappointed.

However, you could tell that she was pretty upset about it.

“How about we try swapping our weapons?”

Maybe it was from the frustration and anger of her continued

losses, but Su Ah suggested we try swapping our weapons.

“Why though?”

Kyung Min replied in a rude tone against Su Ah’s suggestion.

You could clearly tell Su Ah was really upset by then.

“Let’s try it. Maybe if we tried using each other’s weapons, we might be able to learn more about them.”

Kyung Min agreed to try each other’s weapons after I said so. He always tended to ignore Su Ah and made fun of Min Sik’s suggestions every time.

As odd as it was, he was fine with everything I suggested.

Maybe it was because I treated him like a superior ever since I met him.

Kyung Min always complained and had a short temper, but at least his personality isn’t completely trash. Knowing the fact that he was a gangster, he was quite well behaved.

Actually, when Kyung Min introduced himself as a gangster, the atmosphere in the waiting room got quite chilly. Luckily for us, it seemed like Kyung Min was able to get along with other people.

After having swapped our weapons, we began to spar again. Surprisingly, Su Ah won multiple times.

“Holy shit, this is hard to use. The people in the movies used this thing so easily.”

Said Kyung Min after he had an attempt with the katana.

There was quite a bit of improvement once we started sparring with different weapons.

As we got to know more about each other's weapons, we knew how to cover for their weaknesses.

Above all, something must've clicked in Su Ah as she swung Kyung Min's axe.

She started practicing to swing the axe like cutting wood using all her strength.

Although hard to use in a real fight, it seemed ok for her role in the team.

Su Ah trained non-stop with the weapons as she started to gain confidence.

However there was one problem,

“Pierce the enemies’ soul! Judgement! Moonbeam Strike!”

Every time she swung her weapon she would shout something similar to this.

At first I tried to go over it like it was nothing because I believed it was to help her concentration, however I would be lying if I say I didn’t get embarrassed every time she shouted these things.

“Oi, why do I have to feel ashamed because of you?”

“You have to say the name of the skills if you want to activate them.”

But I mean, why did you scream “Pierce” when you are striking downwards.

Makes no sense.

Chapter 6 - Tutorial 1st Floor, Waiting Room (Part 4)

[Attempt 1, Day 0. 26 Hours 10 Minutes]

[Time left until tutorial: 45 hours 50 minutes]

"Like, fuck. So, are you saying I should just shut up and stay here doing nothing?"

"No, I didn't mean that. I only said it because you get agitated so easily."

A fierce tension formed between Min Sik and Kyung Min.

They've already been going at each other for 30 minutes.

The subjects of their arguments for the past 30 minutes had varied greatly.

It was important to note that it all began because of their ego during a match where they sparred against one another.

Furthermore, it looked like both of them wanted to become the leader of the party.

Simply said, Kyung Min was ignorant and was also rather manly.

He hated doing things that were tedious and required thought, instead he prefers actions that would bring him the limelight.

If I had to criticize Min Sik, it would be that his thoughts were too much like an old person.

He was serious and calm, nevertheless he wasn't flexible as a person and he was just so persistent in his views.

And moreover, to put it into words, he displayed a lust for power.

I'm not sure how becoming the leader of merely four people will quench that lust, but nonetheless he just wanted to be the leader.

In all honesty, he led most of the conversations we had as a group.

He encouraged us to share our thoughts on different ways to train.

He had done a decent job at leading the party.

And as for me...

Mm, I had no interest. I basically preferred to play solo. I've tried

and played every genre of games in the past and overall, my favourite type of games are the ones where the required teamwork was minimal and it only relied on myself being good

So, here I was watching these two guys argue away.

Su Ah sat next to me. It also seemed like she didn't want to be involved in their argument, she was watching them on the side-lines just like me'

“HanSeo Univeristy? You must've been really smart.”

“My parents said if I didn't do well in the college entrance exams I would never be able to become a pro-gamer so I studied heaps.”

The two of us leisurely conversed as watched their scene unfold.

I was a little disappointed we didn't have any popcorn.

Finally, it seemed like their argument was reaching the last stretch.

The subject of their high ego argument was now “Who will become the leader of the party?”

“Well then, the person with better performance in the tutorial stage will become the leader of the party.”

“Yep. Don’t go back on your words later.”

And the whole thing was concluded just like that between them.

“Will you guys agree to this too?”

Said Kyung Min as he turned to Su Ah and I.

They came to a conclusion by themselves, ppft what kind of agreement were they talking about.

"Yeah, sure. But, I will deny orders that are illogical no matter who becomes the leader."

And after that, we went back into training.

The training continued.

Min Sik and Kyung Min, who had completed military service, were great help to our training.

We did exercises under their tutelage when we had short breaks.

Although these exercises didn’t require weights, they were ridiculously tiring.

Normally, this type of training would go beyond muscle pain and

would tear our muscles to failure. But as expected, the automated healing effect of the waiting room kept us from the feeling of any muscle pain or fatigue.

With this intense cycle of training and quick recovery, our muscle mass and flexibility improved very quickly.

Although Su Ah was sick of all the stories Min Sik and Kyung Min told of their experiences during military service as if they were boasting, they were definitely a great help.

[Attempt 1, Day 0. 71 Hours 57 Minutes]

[Time left until Tutorial: 3 Minutes]

Finally, the Tutorial begins.

The nervousness of the four lingered in the air of the waiting room. However, you could tell everyone including me, felt more excited in anticipation rather than nervousness and horror.

Well, why else would they have chosen the Hell difficulty?

For the last 72 hours, for 3 days we trained very hard.

It was all possible due to the fact that we couldn't receive lasting

injuries and feel hunger or tiredness in this environment.

If we didn't have this type of advantage, not only would we be out of time, but we would've had multiple injuries like muscle tearing and broken bones from all the sparring we had done.

Instead, we used this waiting room to the best of our advantage and even made use of our break times to frantically train ourselves.

As a result, we all grew to a point where you wouldn't believe that this all happened within a span of 3 days.

[Tutorial, 1st attempt will begin shortly.]

[A portal to the Tutorial stage will now appear.]

4 magical portal barriers appeared in the waiting room.

Above one portal a message appeared.

[Lee Ho Jae]

Mm...

“Guys it seems like only one person can go through a portal.”

It was just as Su Ah said.

All that group training... was it all going to waste now?

“Fuck, does that mean we just our wasted time?”

“Hmm. Well, we didn’t waste all of our time. We trained and grew together. Above all, we may have to cross paths in the future. Don’t be too distressed.”

Min Sik calmed the distressed members.

[The portals will be activated soon.]

We all moved up to our respective portals.

“Be careful everyone. I hope we will all meet each other after the Tutorial.”

I felt the same as Min Sik.

I also want to see these people safe and sound again.

Maybe it was the time of us living together, as we vigorously trained together for the last 3 days, we all grew really close to one another.

Sure, we fought due to our different personalities and got a bit salty between each other, but I felt it was safe to say to call these people my friends.

I preferred playing in a one-man team.

It's uncomfortable trying to cover for others since I was confident that I could do well on my own.

However, maybe it was due to this new environment, these three individuals seemed like people I could depend on.

They weren't too difficult to get along with, they were reasonable during the 3 days I had lived in the enclosed space.

Instead of feeling like I was imprisoned, it felt more like the time when I went on a soccer training camp during the holidays of secondary school.

“Hey, before I go...”

Kyung Min raised his fist.

Everyone smirked and raised fists for one another.

“Don’t get hurt and let’s meet again.”

“You be careful too, Su Ah.”

“Yep, stay safe guys.”

We all comforted each other and stood on our portals.

[The portal will be activated.]

[Please enter the stage. Time left: 24 Hours]

[Will you enter the stage?]

“Yes”

The blue light of the portal grew brighter and it felt like I was falling. As I descended, my whole field of vision changed.

It wasn’t the place that I got used to for three days, instead I was in a dark corridor by myself.

[Tutorial stage, Welcome to the Hell difficulty 1st floor.]

It finally began.

I took slow deep breaths.

Now be calm.

Think about this as if it were like a game.

A straight dark corridor.

Lights hung from above, equal distances apart of each other on the ceiling.

The light was faint, maybe even fainter than a candle.

It was just enough to make out that the corridor was straight.

Damn, it was too dark.

The walls, ceiling and floor were all made of stone.

The ceiling was a little higher than 3 metres.

The stone floor was flat but rough.

Nothing seemed out of the ordinary, I couldn't even slip from this.

Behind me.

A wall and a portal.

A portal?

I approached the portal.

[Travel to 1st floor waiting room?]

“...Yes.”

The next moment, I was back in the waiting room.

[Please enter the stage. Time left: 23 hours 59 minutes]

So, you can come back without any restriction.

Due to the slightly pointless return, I felt my determination

slightly thinned out.

What would happen if the 24-hour restriction passed?

After some thought to myself, I tried to figure out what I could.

Using the sword, I made a small cut on the back of my hand.

Blood dripped slowly, but soon after the bleeding stopped and the wound healed completely.

The automated healing of the waiting room was still in effect.

No matter how many times I may get injured in the tutorial.

If I was able to run back to the waiting room, I could be healed and make a full recovery.

I found something really substantial.

During an emergency situation, it might even save my life.

At that moment, a portal in the corner of the room grew bright and Min Sik appeared.

“Min Sik?”

I felt slightly embarrassed since we had just separated with full determination to go forth Tutorial.

“Hahaha. I thought if I were you, I would test this out too.”

Min Sik scratched the back of his head awkwardly as he spoke.

I shared what I found out with Min Sik.

“This is really important information. Su Ah and Kyung Min should learn about this too...’

But the two never came back.

In all probability, they must have continued on with the Tutorial.

Without being able to do anything, Min Sik and I went back to the tutorial stage.

[Please enter the stage. Time left: 23 Hours 42 minutes.]

[Tutorial stage, Welcome to the Hell difficulty 1st floor.]

Now, let’s start again.

“Status bar.”

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Strength: 10

Dexterity: 13

Endurance: 11

Intelligence: 21

Within three days of training, my strength increased by 2 and my endurance increased by 1. There wasn’t anything like a proper workout machine, but after learning that stats could be increased by exercise, I exercised a lot.

HP and MP were not shown in the status bar.

I wasn’t sure if this was like a game, where you would die if your HP fell to 0.

Here, you could probably die instantly from a lethal blow to the

head or a piercing strike to the heart.

If I could avoid fatal damage like that and make a successful run to the portal of the waiting room, I would be fully healed from any damage that I would have possibly taken.

I know it's impossible to do this without a single drop of blood but I couldn't afford to be careless.

Even if I were attacked anywhere else on the body, I would concentrate to mostly protect my heart, neck and my head.

With the round shield held in my left hand, I lifted it up to the under of my eyes and covered my chest, neck and face. I bent my knees and back to a crouching position so the shield would cover as much of my body as possible.

With only my eyes above the shield and sword drawn in front of me, I slowly moved forward.

Chapter 7 - Tutorial 1st Floor (Part 1)

Tutorial stage.

Hell difficulty, 1st floor.

I walked through an empty dark corridor.

Step by step very slowly.

I kept myself curled up like a grub worm and slowly, very slowly went forward while keeping my shield in front of me.

Like, how long is this going to be?

[1st attempt, Day 1. 1 hour 26 minutes]

Around 5 minutes after I started, I was thinking 'surely something will come out now?'

So I shortened my steps by half.

After 15 minutes, I was thinking 'Something will definitely come out now.'

So I shortened my steps by half.

After 30 minutes, I was thinking ‘Something’s coming out, something’s really coming out!’

So I walked slowly as if I was dragging my feet along the ground.

And, now.

Nothing has come after all this time.

Am I being crazy?

That nice message, the message telling me the time kept bugging me.

Am I wasting this precious time? Is this something like a time-attack mission?

The anxiety and horror in my heart grew and grew.

My body is feeling tired also.

Due to the sword and shield I held in both hands, my arms and shoulders felt stiff.

My back, arms and shoulders were all shaking uncontrollably. It

felt like I could hear my muscles making sounds whenever I moved. Sweat was dripping everywhere and I could smell alcohol in my breath.

Fuck. It was already hard enough to keep my sword and shield at shoulder level. With my legs squatting, my back bent forward and my shoulders and neck curled inwards I kept myself behind the shield as much as possible.

I felt like I was dying walking in this position constantly.

I was thinking of just giving all this up and having a rest.

Straightening my back, no, should I just sit down somewhere and have a rest?

No. I still don't have any information of this place. I shouldn't brush off this tension, I must stay alert.

I can't stay at ease at this time.

I'm not sure if I can react to a dangerous situation even if I'm alert and nervous.

Although it's hard...

I must withstand this for as long as I can.

With a determined mind, I went forward as slow as a turtle.

But then,

[You have learned: Battle concentration Lv.1]

[You have learned: Will Lv.1]

‘Uh?’

As the dazed sound came out of my mouth independent of will I stood still.

Although I was determined to not stop, I should probably think a little bit about that new message.

I straightened my back and walked back a few steps.

‘Status bar’

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Strength: 10

Dexterity: 13

Endurance: 11

Intelligence: 21

Skills:

Battle concentration Level1.

Will Level1.

... So I got some skills.

[Battle Concentration (Lv.1)]

Description: Your concentration rises in battle. Allows you to stay focused for longer periods of time.

[Will (Lv.1)]

Description: Increases your will.

They're both passive skills.

Battle concentration and will. They're both skills related to the situation I'm experiencing right now.

It feels like I learn new skills dependent on certain situations.

I thought you would naturally learn new skills by levelling up or by getting new items; I guess I was wrong.

If what I'm thinking is right, to learn as many skills I must try more diverse things.

Let's try different things when I'm in a safer place.

I wonder if Min Sik, Kyung Min and Su Ah found this out by now?

I shook my head as I thought of the other three.

I can't think of others right now. Let's focus.

I curled up again and went forward. Slowly.

Thinking danger could come out in any moment, I walked forward for roughly an hour as slow as a snail. Finally, the danger

found me.

The reason I could respond to the danger wasn't because I was alert.

It was because of the shield I held up with my left arm.

Ting!

An arrow flew through the dark and got stuck on my shield.

Not until I felt the recoil from when the arrow hit my shield and gave a shock to my left arm, did I realise an arrow was shot towards me.

Ting!

Once again, an arrow got stuck on my shield.

Where is it coming from?

At that moment, I saw a silver flash in front of my eyes.

Instinctively I held the shield over my head

Ting!

That was close.

Phew...

I didn't realise the first two arrows, but I definitely saw and dodged the last one.

Lucklily...

Pick!

?? Another arrow...

Pook!

‘AARRRRGGHHHHH!’

The last arrow shot pierced my ankle.

More than half of the arrow had pierced through.

It hurts, it hurts!

‘Aaaaaahhhhhh...’

For a moment I saw my right ankle with an arrow pierced through it with my shaky vision.

More than half of the arrow had pierced through

I laid on the ground screaming and squirming in pain, but the pain didn't stop.

The blood gushing out of my ankle pooled the floor and reached my face to coat it.

Even with my chaotic mind due to the pain, as I saw my bright red blood my brain functioned to get me out of this.

The waiting room!

I need to get back to the waiting room!

Following my brains' final decision made through the excruciating pain, I went back, tracing the steps I took to come here, back to the waiting room.

I tried whatever I could to get back on both feet; however, without being able to stay balanced, I fell.

AARRRRGGGGHHHH! FUCK!

The arrow must've grazed the floor as I fell; the pain arose again.

Tears were flowing from my eyes.

I stayed on all fours, and using the sword in my hand like a hook I stuck it in the floor as I dragged myself forward.

My muscles screamed as I crawled with my two hands and one usable leg.

They screamed in pain. Agony.

At the same time, the ankle with the arrow pierced through it screamed as if it were experiencing the most pain.

[You have learned: Pain Resistance: Lv.1]

It took me a long, gruelling hour to get to where I was.

Crawling like a lizard with one of my retarded legs, I could see no end to this path.

The crazy speed of my desperate pain-induced crawling was slowing down.

‘Pant, pant, pant.’

The pain subsided from a fresh deep piercing pain to a more compressed and controlled pain.

It must’ve been adrenaline or some shit, but it felt like my brain was finally functioning.

I kept moving forward, even as I was moving forward I kept checking my body status.

I didn’t know if the leg with the arrow pierced through it became paralyzed or something, other than the pain I didn’t feel anything. I tried moving my toes but they didn’t move. No, I didn’t even know if they moved or not, because I couldn’t feel them.

[You have learned: Pain Resistance Lv.2]

[You have learned: Haemorrhage Resistance Lv.1]

Fucking Resistance my ass. I felt no effect.

My normal leg and both my arms and shoulders were trembling all over.

‘Pant. Pant. Pant.’

My lungs warned me to stop the physical exercise and demanded more air.

I could hear a high pitched ringing in my ear, maybe due to excessive haemorrhage.

I could feel a chill on my head of ever-rising temperature.

I stole the sweat drops of my arm and laid them on my face. It was still as hot as a bonfire.

Then, the chill I felt on my face was...

At that moment, I felt a growing dizziness and my vision started to fade.

The word 'Death' flashed in my head.

Think of this as a game? You fucking idiot!

This pain, this feeling. It's real!

Death will be real too.

I couldn't see anything anymore.

I tried rubbing my eyes, pushing on my eyelids and opening my eyes again, but I saw nothing.

In this pitch black place, relying on the faint senses on my arms and legs, I moved.

Luckily the corridor was a straight line.

If I ignored the stone floor I felt on my arms and legs, the only thing I could feel were my own tears rolling down my face.

I thought my tears had all dried up as I crawled my way through this misery, but the pressure of death let my tears flow once more.

Still, I didn't give up and allowed my arms and legs to play in this darkness.

I didn't want to die here in misery.

I don't want to die.

Even if I die I shouldn't die like this.

Never will I die like this.

How long has it been since I started crawling,

I wonder how far I've crawled.

Am I even crawling forward?

A flood of drowsiness filled my head.

I couldn't feel any part of my body anymore.

It is said that the most extreme feeling of pleasure a human can experience is the feeling right before death.

I've seen some perverts on the internet actually die by strangling themselves in attempt to feel this extreme pleasure.

Fuck, sure as hell do I understand them. I want to rely on this drowsiness. Instead of denying and struggling, I just want to stay relaxed.

Is it going to end like this?

Because of a moment of carelessness?

No. I won't become careless. I'll stay aware of my surroundings and slowly...

It was an attack I couldn't detect or even block with my skills.

If I didn't have a shield, the first arrow would've pierced through my heart and I would've died there in an instant.

Just why...

(vooooooommmm)

[Travel to 1st floor waiting room?]

Chapter 8 - Tutorial 1st Floor (Part 2)

[Travel to 1st floor waiting room?]

[You have learned: Stun Resistance Lv.1]

[You have learned: Battle Concentration Lv.2]

[You have learned: Awakening Lv.1]

Have I arrived...

As I regained consciousness, I saw a faint blue light shining from the portal.

I see the portal. My eyes came back to focus in this miraculous moment. The fact that I was able to see again overwhelmed me with joy.

I did it. I stayed alive.

Now I had to decide.

There was one question that wouldn't leave my head even when I

was confused and in pain.

What would happen if I went back to the waiting room with the arrow still pierced through my ankle?

What happens if I were to be healed in that state?

If I were to heal instantly with an arrow in me... maybe both my muscles and nerves would be crippled beyond repair, even with the power of the waiting room.

Do I have to remove the arrow before I enter?

How would I know? I'm not a doctor.

Maybe the waiting 's healing power is omnipotent like that of a game and would send a message,

'You have been hit by an arrow. We will remove the arrow first then heal you :D'

And provide exceptional customer service like that.

But if it doesn't, I don't know what will happen to my leg.

And so I decided.

Although I was on the verge of death not too long ago, maybe it was the new skills I learned or maybe I saw the chance of being able to live but I could feel some vitality coming back in my body.

Perhaps my body is burning the last vestige of life, with death waiting just beyond.

I had no time to waste.

Alright, let's do this. I could simply enter the portal if the pain and danger was at critical level.

Maybe it was due to the new skills or my nerves must have all died but the pain coming from my body had lessened significantly.

With full determination, I sat next to the portal leaning on an adjacent wall.

I could really die at any time now. I couldn't even see just a moment ago.

If something went wrong, if I had the slightest thought that my consciousness was slipping, get in the portal.

I confirmed to myself.

“Hooo.”

I took a deep breath and bit down hard on the leather strap of my round shield.

I raised my right knee.

With my hands shaking, I raised my sword...

And struck downwards.

Tick.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGHH

Tremendous amount of pain struck me again, as if it came from the very depths of hell.

Blood dripped between my gums as I made inaudible groans.

Instinctively to protect myself, I reached out to the portal. However, instead of teleporting back to the portal, I held on firmly.

I brought the sword up again after crying and groaning for a time.

It was impossible trying to hit the arrow off in one swing. It was too greedy of me. No, why did I even have the thought of it being

possible to begin with? I must have just gone mental from the overwhelming pain.

I lifted the sword once more and placed it on the arrow.

I started sawing.

"Uuuh! Guuuh!"

With each movement of the sword, I felt the pain piercing through my spine up to my neck.

Tick.

Finally, the tip of the arrow had been sawn off.

The pain finally subsided.

With my hand shaking, I grabbed on to the other half of the arrow pulled it out at once.

I had to groan and cry once more from the burning pain within my ankle.

Now instead of physically feeling painful, I felt emotionally depressed. Fucking. Why me. Fucking son of a bitch.

These fucking cunts. I don't know who you are. But I will kill you.

[You have learned: Pain Resistance Lv.3]

[You have learned: Haemorrhage Resistance Lv.2]

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh! Finally it was over.

It was time to be freed from this pain.

It felt like I was about to white out due to the pain but I also finally felt a sense of relief.

To end it, I pierced a small splinter of the arrow into the palm of my hand.

[Travel to 1st floor waiting room?]

Yes.

And then I lost consciousness.

“Mmmmm...”

When I woke up and opened my eyes, I saw the familiar view of the waiting room that I had stayed at for a few days.

I couldn't feel pain any longer.

Slowly, I began to remember the pain I felt just before I fainted.

I actually nearly died.

It was beyond close, the closest anyone had ever reached.

I had pretty much done all the warm up exercises, changed into a swimming suit, dove straight into the River Styx, then was sent back because of a false start.

If I had come back here a little bit later, I may have had to introduce myself to my ancestors.

“Haaa...”

I felt a little bit relief. I avoided death and was free from pain.

As I looked downwards, my body was completely covered with dried blood. The white T-shirt I wore had dyed completely red.

And... Fuck. Did I piss myself?

Luckily the waiting room completely nullified the smell of blood and piss.

I looked at the ceiling all dazed and lifted up my right hand.

The splinter of the arrow was rolling around on the floor and my wound was completely healed.

How nice. The service supplied by the waiting room was much more exceptional than I had expected.

It pulled out the splinter from my hand and even healed it.

In other words, all that bullshit I went through for trying to take out the fucking arrow out of my ankle was for nothing.

Ahhh... Why am I so dumb? Am I retarded?

If I had to pull it out, I could've just pulled it out in the waiting room. Not only does the waiting room heal everything, it also nullifies all sense of pain.

To do something so insane just because I regained hope from getting to the portal.

It wouldn't have been odd if I died due to shock, or even excessive blood loss.

Simply said, I literally gambled with my life on the line.

Haa... Let's not do something like that again.

... How did everyone else do.

“Community.”

[Difficulty Hell, Noticeboard (1/1)] P1

.....

Um, what?

How do I take this in?

I read it once more.

.....

Difficulty Hell, Noticeboard (1/1)

.....

Again.

Difficulty Hell.

It meant the Tutorial's difficulty was Hell.

Hell difficulty, Noticeboard.

It meant the Noticeboard for Hell difficulty in the Tutorial's Community.

Hell difficulty, Noticeboard (1/1)

The first 1 meant the number of people currently on the Community.

In the Hell waiting room, there was one person and the person looking in the Community chat was only me.

Ok. I understand the 1.

The second 1 meant the total number of people in Hell difficulty.

1.

I see. They're dead.

All three of them.

'How did all three of them die? This is unbelievable.' For some reason I didn't feel any sort of emotion like that.

To be honest, the thought of them possibly dying did cross my mind. In fact, surviving it would be more of a surprise. It was a miracle to do so.

If I didn't have my shield I would have definitely died 10 times out of 10.

On top of that, Kyung Min and Su Ah didn't even know they could come back to the waiting room.

Even if they avoided instant death, it would be difficult to survive all the bleeding.

Was it because I was about to die just before? Am I still in too much shock to feel emotion? Or, have I already adjusted to this

crazy situation.

The deaths of the other three did not send me into any emotional or mental shock.

Although It was only for 3 days, I thought I managed to make a bond beyond that of friendship with them. But, all I felt was a little sadness for them, only that.

Was I the weird one?

I don't know.

Fuck.

Although my brain had calmly accepted the situation, tears flowed from my eyes. To think I could still cry even after all that shit that happened before.

“...Status bar.”

It's better to focus on something else to stop the crying.

I saw a lot of messages indicating I had received skills when I crawled my way to the portal. I couldn't check them because of the situation I was in before, so I opened the status bar to check it out.



[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Strength: 10

Dexterity: 13

Endurance: 11

Intelligence: 21

Skills: Battle Concentration Lv.2, Will Lv.1, Awakening Lv.1, Pain ResistanceLv3., Haemorrhage Resistance Lv.2, Stun Resistance Lv.1

Battle Concentration and Will skills that I learnt before being struck by the arrow had levelled up by one.

I also received 3 Resistance skills and Awakening.

Just looking at the name of the resistances vividly reminded me of the pain I went through.

[Pain Resistance(Lv.3)]

Description: Resistance towards status effect ‘pain’ is

increased.

[Haemorrhage Resistance(Lv.2)]

Description: Resistance towards status effect ‘haemorrhage’ is increased.

[Stun Resistance (Lv.1)]

Description: Resistance towards status effect ‘stun’ is increased.

All of them were passive skills that increased my resistance to a status effect.

They definitely looked like good, useful skills but I didn't want to look at its effects at all.

All they did were to increase my resistance a little. They didn't lessen the pain I felt or even stop any bleeding.

[Awakening (Lv.1)]

Description: Awakens the mind for a period of time in times of dire need.

This looked like another passive skill too.

It would be nice if I had an active skill. I was just a little disappointed.

Now with everything checked...

Do I have to go back again?

Chapter 9 - Tutorial 1st Floor (Part 3)

[1st attempt, Day 1. 8:20]

[Please enter the stage. Time left: 19 hours 12 minutes]

The waiting room of the Tutorial is like the healing well of an AOS genre game. Like a homebase, it is a place that completely restores one's health.

Moreover, you have a limited time you can stay within the area.

I shouldn't waste this precious time.

[Enter the stage?]

"Yes"

[Welcome to Tutorial stage, Hell difficulty 1st floor]

This made it my third time here.

A dark straight corridor.

At first, I felt an unknown excitement and nervousness. It enthralled me. The second time was not very different but now...

Now I feel a slight horror in this place.

Mmmm...

No signs of blood stains but I'm sure I lost a large amount of blood when I crawled back here. Not to mention, I was a fucking idiot for trying to pull out the arrow which made me lose even more blood.

However, the walls and floor were spotless. Not a single drop of red.

It was as if the whole stage reset when I went to the waiting room and back.

I took in everything and with it came a dreadful conclusion.

What if the arrow trap got reset as well?

Ahh, fuck. I'm gonna get hit again for sure.

But what could I do? I couldn't just stay here and idle at the

Tutorial's entrance.

I don't know what penalty there was if I don't clear the area in time. Let's go. I must move.

I wasn't entirely sure, but I vaguely remembered the general target of the arrows that were to be shot.

I didn't know what awaited me before yet I somehow still managed to stay alive. I should at least try and clear this stage cleanly now.

Now, positive thinking. They say optimism could change the world.

Let's go!

Aaaaaahhhhhh.....

I think it's hereeeeeee

I think roughly the trap was hereeeee.....

Every step forward got heavier than the last.

Was it because I got so fucked up from the first time?

I was scared to the bone.

However, I couldn't stop here.

I slowly took deep controlled breaths.

I covered my eyes and quietly calmed myself down.

I could do this!

One step forward.

Remember. Two above the shield. One straight ahead.

Lastly, one to the ankle.

Ahh, But what if the pattern changed too?

Ahhh..... I was getting paranoid.

I stumbled backwards.

What if the pattern had really changed?

I pondered for a while.

Final conclusion.

So what if the pattern changed? Was there really anything I could do about that?

No.

It was just like before, I didn't know when or where the arrow would come.

At that moment I thought, 'Let's just avoid instant death'. Yeah, I thought like that.

I should protect my heart and torso in general with my shield and with the sword in my right hand I should protect my neck and head.

In the end, I was back to square one.

After some deep thought, I raised my shield and slowly, very slowly moved forward.

It felt like I was scraping away my life every step at a time.

I've never played it before but, If I were to play Russian Roulette, I felt like it would feel like this.

I took a step.

Then another step.

My heart skipped a beat every time I took a step forward.

Again another step.

Tick!

An arrow!

Another!

Tick!

I shielded myself from the second arrow too!

Third one to the head!

The third one will come to the head!

I instantly crouched.

Nice, I dodged it! I did it!

But then, a silver projectile flashed before my eyes.

It was an arrow.

Pook-

I stopped the arrow that flew towards me out of the blue with my right arm.

With my unstable crouched position and the excruciating pain I felt in my right arm. In shock, I fell before I knew it.

And again,

Pook-

The last arrow pierced my ankle.

"Oooooooooooooooooooooo..."

The pain I felt in my arm and ankle felt like it was travelling up my nerves to burn my brain to ash.

At that moment,

[Level up]

[Dexterity increased by 2. Endurance increased by 1. Pain Resistance increased by 1.]

Huh?

As the level up message appeared, the pain subsided.

"What the..."

The arrows pierced through my arm and ankle had both disappeared. My wounds were all healed too, just as if I was in the waiting room.

Well, just my luck.

So, there was such a thing as levelling up.

It appeared that your HP is restored to full when you level up.

"Status bar."

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv.1

Strength: 10

Dexterity: 15

Endurance: 12

Intelligence: 21

Skills: Battle concentration Lv.2, Will Lv.2, Awakening Lv.1, Pain Resistance Lv.4, Haemorrhage Resistance Lv.2, Fainting Resistance Lv.1

I found some slight changes when I viewed my status bar.

As the message said, My dexterity and endurance had increased a little and my pain Resistance level had increased by one.

And lastly,

Lv.1

Was I Lv.0 before? Did I even have a level?

Since there was nothing about levels in the status bar before, I thought there wasn't a levelling system.

I was so, so lucky that I had levelled up in that exact moment in time.

Otherwise, I would have had to crawl back to the waiting room again with an arrow stuck in my ankle AND my arm.

Or maybe, I could've died too.

Phew..

Now. Let's clear up this information.

I had to think about how I could use this new information to my advantage.

Firstly, there's the traps.

The pattern of the trap was exactly the same as it was in my first encounter.

One arrow to my left arm.

One to my heart.

One towards my forehead.

One towards my ankle.

Before my second encounter, I had thought of something.

How could a trap aim directly for those critical areas?

A person's physique could vary, or a person could just stick themselves to a wall and follow it.

But not this trap, the trap knew exactly where my critical areas were and shot arrows precisely towards them.

The trap wasn't set so it would follow a set path. It was set to aim for areas on my body and then fired.

That's why even though I crouched after I had blocked the first two arrows, the third arrow was fired directly towards my forehead instead of missing and flying above me.

If I hadn't quickly blocked the arrow with my right arm, I could've really just died there.

I couldn't simply memorize the pattern and dodge pre-emptively.

I had to dodge the arrow after it had been fired or alternatively, raise my shield to block it.

But still, if I knew the pattern, I would still be able to react much faster thanks to this precious information.

What I learned next was the level up.

After levelling up, my body was completely healed. Not only did it heal my wounds, it also cleared the fatigue that I was starting to feel.

I came to a realization, there were 2 ways to heal myself.

The waiting room and levelling up.

The waiting room provided me with the option to heal whenever I want, with the downfall that I must backtrack my steps to get there.

Levelling up allowed me to be healed instantly at that time, but I couldn't tell when I would level up.

In light of this information, my chances of survival had definitely increased.

The third thing I learned was the conditions to level up.

I guess it's like exp?

I definitely levelled up after being hit by the last arrow.

I could think of two conditions to level up in this situation.

Firstly, I had cleared the trap.

I cleared the trap twice.

And let's think about the times I got hit by an arrow or had blocked an arrow.

I had blocked 5 arrows and got hit by 3.

If I were to gain exp by blocking arrows or getting shot by one, to keep levelling up and progress further, I had to attempt as many traps as I could.

Even with two experiences on the verge of death, I knew it would be even harder from here.

The messages kept reminding me that this was the 1st floor of the Tutorial.

There will be a 2nd floor, and there will be a 3rd floor. I think if difficulties can rise, they will rise. But I don't think things will ever

get easier.

The last piece of information I gathered from this experience was that, I levelled up during my second attempt and not my first.

I gained experience points from a trap that had been reset due to my actions of going in and coming back from the waiting room.

With all this information summed up, my final conclusion was simple.

I had to venture on.

I must attempt and challenge more and more to gain exp and grow.

Whether I dodge arrows or not, I still gain exp.

So, it was just like from the beginning, I just had to avoid instant death.

I could still rely on levelling up and heading back to the waiting room to heal any non-fatal wounds.

No matter how painful and unberable it was. I must grow and level up as much as it possible to in the 1st floor.

This wasn't the time to be scared of injury. This was the time for me to move forward.

I couldn't let fear rule me and inhibit my growth.

[1st attempt, Day 1. 9:05]

I don't know how long I am allowed to stay in the first floor.

Who knows, there could be a time limit.

I couldn't waste any more time.

I had to change my playstyle.

With full determination I walked forward.

Instead of walking at a pace where I'd be yawning of boredom, I walked with faster strides. However, I took these steps cautiously and didn't keep my guard down.

[You have learned Will Lv.2]

[The God of Adventure shows interest in you.]

[Endurance increased by 1.]

Chapter 10 - Tutorial 1st Floor (Part 4)

[1st attempt, Day 28. 4:05]

I was lucky for not sleeping in today.

I looked at my surroundings after quickly washing my face using the water bottle I took out from my inventory.

I'm inside the waiting room.

Finally, the 28th day.

Day 28, I had decided it as the D-day, my Maginot Line. I will clear this floor.

For the last 28 days, there was nothing but focus for growing and getting stronger.

I had lost count on how many times I was on the verge of death.

There was only determination to clear the 1st floor of the Tutorial today.

Excitement and uneasiness loomed on the horizon, maybe it was because it was the day of the test.

Before departing I opened my inventory to fill my stomach a bit.

I took out the jerky I saved up for today.

Usually I had a salty beef jerky, but today I had a special sweet pork jerky.

Of the jerky bundle I had in my inventory, it was the last portion of pork.

The spicy kick that helped to alleviate the feeling of the greasiness, on top of not being hard and chewy, made it easy to have.

After having a mouthful of the jerky, I cleaned my greasy fingers on my clothes.

I had one last swig of water and put my water bottle back in my inventory.

“Community.”

It was the Community noticeboard where I could converse with other survivors in the Tutorial.

Although I was the only one alive in the hell difficulty, there weren't that many survivors in the other difficulties.

Like how the difficulties differ, the Tutorials were also different. However, there were still shared similarities across all difficulties.

It was already made known that a few people had cleared the 1st floor of the Tutorial.

These individuals had shared the information they had gathered on how they cleared the 1st floor.

After checking for new information in the Community noticeboard, I turned it off.

It was time to leave.

[Enter the stage?]

“Yes.”

[Tutorial stage, Welcome to the 1st floor of Hell difficulty.]

After a bright light was shone, I was in the 1st floor of the tutorial in a blink of an eye.

It was the same as every other time, a dark straight corridor.

After today, I will never have to see this corridor.

I jogged at ease through the dark corridor.

If it were like some time ago I would proceed with utmost caution, but this time it was different.

My eyes shone in the dark.

[Night Vision Lv.2]

[Eye Lights Lv.1]

The skill Night Vision was just like it said, it allowed me to see a little clearer in the dark.

The light and shades weren't all so clear, but thanks to this skill I was able to move easily in the dark without much hindrance.

On top of that, after learning Eye Lights, I had a clearer field of vision.

Eye Lights was the only active skill I had learned.

When I use it, the light that hit my retina was reflected outwards. Just like the shiny eyes of cats in the middle of the night.

It seemed like the Eye Lights skill barely used any of my magical energy.

Since there was nothing about MP, I couldn't really tell.

One thing was for sure, I could use it all day without any trouble.

It might even just be a toggled skill that doesn't require any MP.

Without pause, I carried on running.

The distance I still had to cover was long, but there was no need to conserve my energy.

Thank you, boosted endurance stat.

Moreover,

[Sprint Lv.1]

I learned a skill that aided me when I was running.

My body got lighter and used less energy when running.

Thanks to this skill, running was a breeze. It made me faster too.

You could feel how refreshing it was, just by running.

I didn't know before but, running was something that made me feel good.

Before I even realized, I was at the first arrow trap.

There weren't signs around but with all that I've been through, it was familiar enough for me to grasp the location of the trap by sheer instinct alone.

It was like a slight signal or even just a sudden eerie atmosphere that indicated a trap nearby.

Pew-Pew

I could hear two arrows being fired from far away.

[Heightened Senses Lv.3]

Not only did this skill boost my hearing, but it also amplified all five of my senses like sight, touch and weirdly enough my sense of taste and smell.

Before, I couldn't even tell that an arrow was flying toward me. I only knew when the arrow had already struck my shield.

Pook-

Pook-

The first and second arrows were caught in my shield.

The third arrow was in flight towards me.

I tilted my head slightly to dodge the arrow.

Next,

Jump!

The arrow glided beneath my feet.

With my increased dexterity stat, dodging these arrows were a piece of cake.

It was needless to say my experience, fitness and focus had

improved greatly too.

Clearing the first arrow trap was a walk in the park.

Without stopping, I carried on.

There was much to go.

Tat. Tat. Tat.

I ran a little faster.

Towards the left side of my face, an arrow was fired from the ceiling.

While looking at the arrow, I calmly blocked it with my shield.

This arrow pierced through the shield and got stuck. It was fired with a stronger force than the previous arrows.

When I previously blocked this arrow, it had pierced the shield and my left arm.

The right side next.

Tick-

With my sword held up flat, I parried the arrow.

It fell to the floor with a 'tick' sound.

You wouldn't wanna know what I had to go through for trying to block that arrow with my sword.

I failed a few times and was actually hit a few times too.

[Beginner Swordsmanship Lv.1]

[Cut Lv.1]

However as a result, I learned some skills.

The next was an arrow directly from the front.

Although my senses had been enhanced, I couldn't tell the trajectory of the arrow and I also couldn't hear it.

I could only predict where the arrow would come from by memory and try to dodge it.

After ducking to dodge the arrow coming head on, I took a big

jump forward.

A few arrows flew beneath me as I jumped.

I landed with a forwards roll.

After checking that it was the last arrow that was shot, I stood up and started running again.

Occasionally, hard to detect arrows like these were fired.

If I think about it though, it reminded me about my first attempt of the trap.

Let's not talk about the first two arrows, I couldn't even see them.

The third arrow, I barely dodged.

As for the last arrow, I heard it.

Of course, I didn't dodge it though.

Each and every arrow was fired at different speeds and correspondingly, they all sounded different as well.

As I memorized each and every unique arrow, a sudden thought

came to me.

This was real training. A tutorial.

I could tell it was all designed to train the challenger.

If it was an arrow that was hard to dodge, it was easy to detect, and if it was an arrow that was easy to dodge, it flew quieter.

Now, dodge this.

For this one, you got to use your eyes. But I'll make it easy and fire it straight ahead of you.

The last one was hard to dodge right? I'll make it louder, easier for you to hear.'

I thought that's how the Tutorial worked, how its thought process was like.

If these traps were placed to try and kill me, I'm pretty sure it would have done so already.

For ordinary people, the difficulty that they were in may seemed like it was designed that way.

Where death was inevitable.

Ahead of me was the most dangerous trap of the 1st floor.

The bottomless pit.

The width was roughly 20 metres. The only way to get across was by dragging yourself along the rope tied across the pit.

When I first attempted this trap, I hadn't learned Night Vision and nearly fell into the abyss.

I almost slipped to death, but luckily I held on to the rope firmly, clinging to life.

Continuing on, I slowly dragged myself across the pit via the rope.

Thanks to growth of my muscles and stats, it wasn't that hard to cross.

The problem however, was the arrow that was fired at that moment.

Since I was literally holding on to life, I couldn't dodge the arrow and had no choice but to be hit by it.

The danger of the arrow plus the danger of falling. The number of times I nearly died while attempting this trap was too much to

count.

But this time...

Tat. Tat. Tat.

There was no reason to stop. I charged forward.

When I reached the rope, instead of hanging onto it, I ran forward.

I could hear the whizzing sounds of the arrows flying towards me but none of them actually hit.

I was able to run across without falling like a trapeze artist thanks to my balancing skills.

It was only possible due to the combination of my heightened senses.

At this moment, I learned that similar skills could be combined.

Alright, there goes the cliff trap.

Now it was time for the most tedious trap.

Now, from here it was a running section. You have to run

without stopping for 30 minutes.

After 30 minutes of running, there was a trap.

And after that, you had to run again for another 30 minutes and yet another trap would await your presence.

It goes on and on like this, multiple times.

If you were able to go on a long distance without hindrance, an arrow would fly towards you out of the blue.

That was a critical trap.

It was mentally exhausting to go through such a thing. Just picture, travelling with nervousness and tension, but just as you start to get comfortable, an arrow silently flies towards you.

I couldn't really tell the specific distance that triggers it either, even after running for thirty minutes.

It felt like the distances in which the traps were spread out weren't equal.

So, without dropping your guard you had to keep running and dodge the arrow when you noticed it.

It wasn't a battle against the Tutorial, it was a battle to keep a focused mind for long periods of time.

A battle against myself.

[Battle Concentration Lv.5]

If this wasn't one of the few skills that I had learned initially, my entire experience here might have been more perilous.

With that, I was able to keep myself focused enough for such dangers to not become a matter when running long distances.

Honing this skill made it gradually easier for me to detect and dodge arrows that came from nowhere.

I was quite proud of myself for improving and growing like this for the last 28 days.

I kept running forward with the refreshing air hitting my face.

Chapter 11 - Tutorial 1st Floor (Part 5)

"Uh... Uh..."

I took a momentary pause to catch my breath. Despite my improved stats and abilities, this journey proved to be strenuous and time consuming.

I had left the waiting room at 4 O'clock and had ran for 15 hours non-stop.

Effortlessly making my way through the ridiculous arrow traps that were planted along the way.

I just needed a little more time. No more, no less, just 3 more hours, it would have changed and made things easier. However, it looked like Tutorial had deemed I wasn't to be given such a luxury.

A few days ago, new information had spread in the Community chat,

Every 1st attempt had to be completed within 30 days.

The penalty for not clearing the 1st floor within 30 days was still unknown to us.

You could be ousted from the Tutorial due to failing, maybe even receive judgement due to failing. Who knew?

This only meant one thing. I had to clear this floor today, tomorrow, or at least by the day after tomorrow.

I took out the water bottle from my inventory and splashed water on my face.

A small burst of renewed energy surged through me as the cold water touched my face.

While jumping up and down, I checked my status.

There was no problem with my focus, and I wasn't bleeding too much. There were no weakened senses either.

There were 2 arrows pierced through my right arm.

Throughout my time here, I had grown a considerable amount and experienced multiple traps. Despite this, I still wasn't able to get through this stage without taking any harm.

I couldn't produce a strategy in time, so I just tanked a few arrows instead of dodging and subsequently, even though I knew they were coming, they naturally found their way through to me.

This was the time when I was barely able to tell the difference between different types of arrows that were fired.

If the first arrow was shot from a damaged long bow, the later traps felt like they were shot from a powerful recurve bow. Some of them were fired with such power that it made you wonder if there was a ballista lying around.

Truth be told, I've never seen a longbow or even a recurve bow but I'm going to assume that this was the force those respective bows would exert on their arrows.

Luckily I levelled up just a moment ago, so I only have 2 arrows pierced through me.

Ah, I could only imagine how good it would feel if there were no arrows in me.

Whatever, this was still good.

I've been hit by so many arrows that being hit by just 2 felt like just a minor injury.

“Phewww-“

As I looked towards the ground I saw a red line drawn.

It was just screaming to me ‘Theres a trap here!’. This was the only trap in Tutorial where it actually warned me that there was one.

As soon as I crossed the red line arrows were flying towards from up down left and right.

The scary part of this was, there was no pattern in which how the arrows were fired.

This trap was a close second in terms of danger compared to the cliff trap earlier on.

On my first attempt, I was hit by so many arrows that I looked like a hedgehog and dressed in my swimming gear trying to cross the River Styx.

Thanks to my luck of the gods, I levelled up and was able to survive it.

For my second attempt I memorised the 'pattern' that I had experienced in my first attempt.

Since there were arrows shot in every direction, I couldn't memorise the order of all the arrows, but after memorising the arrows that were aimed towards my critical points I attempted the trap.

In result, I nearly died.

The arrows that were fired other than the arrows I had memorised were deadly.

I couldn't respond to them in time.

The outcome. I got hit by double the amount of arrows I got hit in the first attempt.

This time I pretty much crossed the River Styx and held hands with my great grandfather.

The whole time it's been about patterns!

Why are there no patterns out of the blue?

Wasn't this just a bit too much?

If I didn't see it ahead of the trap after my first attempt, I would've died just there.

Now this was my third attempt at this trap.

First, I roughly broke off the arrows in my arm.

I couldn't take them out and heal myself at this very moment so I broke them off so they wouldn't get in the way when trying to move.

It was impossible to move my right arm to swing the sword due

to the damage from the arrows. My limit was to just hold the sword in my hands. I'll use my right arm and the sword like a shield.

A round shield on my left arm. A retarded shield on my right arm.

Perfect.

I was fully prepared.

Now I just lumbered up and massaged a few sore spots on my body.

AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHh.....!

Fuck. You can do this Lee Ho Jae.

Who cares if there isn't a pattern. You can do this. No, you have to do this.

Even doing pointless shit like psyching myself before the trap took up some time.

Although there was still some time left to clear the 1st attempt, I wasn't sure how long it would take to fully clear this.

I needed to be more resourceful with what time I had left and move with haste.

Ok, let's go.

I realised something after my first two attempts of this trap.

Arrows were fired only 3 seconds after I had crossed the red line.

In other words, I had to gap as far as I could in those 3 seconds.

I took a few steps back from the red line.

After I controlled my breathing, I got into a ready position for running that I had learned in high school.

Now was it hands at shoulder width?

Argh, it was hard to get in the position with the sword and shield.

With one knee bent.

Now raise your leg and ass.

Aaannnndd..... GO!

I sprinted with all my might.

I was at the red line at an instant.

Damn! This felt like doing long jump off a cliff!

This was the greatest high I've ever felt!

Tat!

I crossed the red line.

I didn't slow down.

I couldn't stop now!

Three!

Two!

One!

Nice! I'm already past halfway!

As soon as I reached zero on my countdown I saw a flash of an arrow tip ahead of me.

I jumped to slide tackle across the floor.

From there, lots of arrows were fired at a low height.

There was no need to pay attention to the arrows coming from behind and from the sides.

I was going forward at a very fast speed.

Slowing down wasn't an option, so I ended up rolling without control to try and dodge the arrows.

With a PABABABT I heard arrows getting stuck in the ground.

I deflected arrows on my left side with the shield as I was rolling.

I felt a dull pain in my wrist.

My wrist must've been twisted due to the shield strapped to my arm when I was rolling along the floor.

I ignored the full pain I felt and ran forward.

I couldn't stop for even a moment in this trap.

Since there were arrows being fired from every direction I had to maintain a high running speed forward so I would be hit by less arrows from the back and sides.

If I got hit around my waist or my legs by at least one arrow I wouldn't be able to move and my chances of dying would increase greatly.

It was a price to pay when you could detect pretty much everything in your path with heightened senses.

Tong!

As I blocked the arrow that flew to the left side of my face with my shield, another arrow flew to my bare stomach.

I panic and blocked it with my right arm.

With a pook sound of my muscles tearing, the arrows pierced through my right arm.

Damn!

The arrow had pierced near where the previous arrows were already stuck in and that exponentially increased the pain.

I was trying to maintain my speed without stopping once, but

due to the pain and shock I stopped for a split second.

POOK! POOK! POOK!

A few arrows were fired from behind.

I bent over to the side to dodge the arrows, but due to the slowed speed I was struck by one arrow to my back.

ARRrrrrghhhhh!

Fuck, now there was no choice.

I had to carry on running forward blocking the arrows I saw and tanking every other arrow like a rampaging hulk.

Forward!

Instead of trying to dodge the arrows aimed at my face, I raised my arms and shield to block it.

One careless head tilt to the side of an incoming arrow that wasn't in my field of vision would be the end of me.

Pook, pook.

A few more arrows struck my body.

Ignoring the pain, I carried on.

It felt like every step I took tore my back muscles due to the arrowhead stuck in there.

Pook.

An arrow struck my left calf.

As the arrow struck deep in the muscle, my left leg ceased to move for a moment.

In that one moment, my rhythm got tangled and I ended up falling.

I stood up instantly with death flashing right in front my eyes as motivation and began to run. It was more like a half hop with speed.

Arrows weren't flying towards me from just the behind...

Ahead!

At the very moment my focus was slightly hindered, I tried to dodge an arrow coming from ahead by tilting my head, however it ended up piercing my ear instead.

Arrrgrhgh!

I was losing vision and my balance. Then.

Pook!

An arrow struck my right heel.

Ahhh great, now I couldn't use both my legs.

I thought to myself, 'Was this really how I'm going to die?'

I threw my body forward with all my energy.

Puck!

Eeeuughhh!

Since there was nothing sound about giving up, a forward roll as a landing was a luxury that I couldn't even dream of in these circumstances.

And,

Pshhhhhhhh....

I heard water.

I must've cleared the trap.

I lived again...

[Healing Well]

Description: Heals when consumed or rubbed. It may work for your bald head too....

When I had taken more damage in the second attempt compared to the first attempt of this trap, it was the healing well that allowed me stay alive.

I slowly crawled to the Healing Well.

With what strength I had left, I threw my body into the healing waters.

And just like that, I lost consciousness.

Chapter 12 - Tutorial 1st Floor (Part 6)

[1st attempt, Day 29. 2 O'clock]

‘Gasp!’

Wow, out of all the ways to die...I nearly died from drowning.

Everything was fine until I decided to toss myself into the healing well, I nearly became the ghost of the waters.

Wow...

I looked around myself and saw the healing well dyed in red.

Just from the look of things, this was more like a leva pool from hell than a healing well.

I’m almost completely healed from it, so it’s fine.

“Hup.”

I let out a short shout and concentrated as I took out the arrows in me, one by one.

Blood gushed out of my wounds as I pulled out the arrows from my bare body.

Luckily the healing well instantly acted to heal it.

Awwwww, Ho Jae you're so good at taking out arrows!

Is anyone going to compliment me?

I felt a little proud about myself, just like when I was young and finally got the hang of using chopsticks.

Wow, I'm growing stronger. At this rate, soon I'll become a troll.

Perhaps later you could even use my blood to create potions.

Hahahahahahaha. Fuck.

I made my way to the fountain of the healing well to drink some of the water that wasn't contaminated by my own blood.

It kind of tasted like coconut water. Ew.

After I had thoroughly checked that my body had fully recovered, I waddled out of the healing well.

While waiting for myself to dry out from all the water and blood,

I decided to sort out my thoughts.

First, the mistakes I made in the previous trap.

It was my third try.

Even on my third attempt I got injured too much.

Like, wayyy too much.

I think it was even worse from the first attempt.

I shouldn't have taken this amount of damage, not from how far I've come and grown compared to when I initially attempted the crazy trap.

There was only one explanation. The time when I blocked an arrow coming straight towards me with my bare right arm.

The arrowhead must've hit some sort of nerve in there and my body stopped moving for an instant, causing me to become disorientated at the high speed that I was moving at.

On top of that, I even calmly thought that it would be better to tank a few more arrows rather than to dodge them. In my head, I thought it would be alright because there wasn't much distance left to cover.

In result, I nearly died, yet again.

Now let's think of it again. The arrows that were fired didn't have a consistent pattern like the previous traps.

But the frequency in which they were fired in was.

Then maybe, Tutorial wasn't trying to test how fast I could clear it, but instead to calmly dodge each arrow one at a time?

I couldn't say for certain without any proof but I think it might just be so.

So the traps in this tutorial wasn't simply to inflict excruciating pain while you clear them.

If you think of the concept of the traps, they were designed to help you grow and improve.

Perhaps if I stood still, or even moved slowly to calmly dodge the arrows...

I maybe could've learned a new skill based on dodging.

Even if I didn't, it would've been good experience.

To constantly gain some sort of experience was the key element

to becoming stronger.

If I just had a bit more time, I wonder how things would've changed if I had tried that trap four to five... no just even one more time.

It was a little saddening that I didn't have much time left.

Honestly, there was no choice. There wasn't enough time to backtrack to the waiting room and get back to this point.

I had already attempted this trap for the third time.

There were plenty of opportunities to gain something out of it.

It was my fault for not taking advantage of that fact.

"Status."

[Lee Ho Jae]

Lv.6

Strength: 12

Dexterity: 21

Endurance/Stamina: 16

Intelligence: 22

Skills: Battle Concentration Lv.5, Will Lv.3, Awakening Lv.1, Night vision Lv.2, Eye Lights Lv.1, Sprint Lv.1, Heightened Senses Lv.3, Beginner Swordsmanship Lv.1, Cut Lv.1, Pain Resistance Lv.8, Haemorrhage Resistance Lv.4, Fainting Resistance Lv.1, Piercing Resistance Lv.1

Miscellaneous: The God of Adventure has interest in you.

In that time, Pain Resistance had gained a level.

I prayed that at level 10 it would evolve into a skill like Pain Immunity. Please do so.

Pain Resistance allowed you to withstand pain, not lessen it.

Thanks to Heightened Senses, it felt like my sensation of pain was more noticeable now. This fucking..

I turned off the status bar after checking that not much had changed other than that.

I took out some jerky from my inventory and walked as I

munched on its chewy goodness.

The salty taste out of the blue shocked my tongue.

A new piece of information was spread around in the Community chat. It was some weird theory that there was a boss room at the end of each floor. Many didn't believe it but as more and more people who had cleared the first floor confirmed its existence, the theory became a fact.

In addition, if I followed the information given in the Community chat, it also stated that the Healing Well was the last part of the tutorial.

In other words, the boss room was right ahead.

I was finally at the point of clearing the 1st floor of the tutorial. At this point, I've reached this Healing Well and there was only one more trap left, the boss room.

“Finally, I can see the end.”

If I really wanted to clear this a little quicker, I probably could've attempted the boss room a few days ago.

However, I decided that it would be better to grind my way through as much as I could and hence attempted each trap multiple times.

Now today, on the second last day of what time was allotted to me, I will finally challenge the boss room.

I was constantly wringing out the water from my clothes while I walking when the corridor was suddenly filled with a thick fog.

I took a few more steps, a large stone door appeared.

As I laid my hand on the stone door while thinking, ‘How do I open this?’, a message appeared in my field of vision.

[Will you attempt this?]

Um, I need an explanation.

Can that be arranged?

A warning sign about a boss room would have been nice.

“Yes.”

Anyway, it was fine. I had worked so hard so I that could walk with confidence at this very moment right?

I worked so hard that I puked blood pfft..

I believed in what I had achieved over the time.

Guguguguugug-With the loud vibrating sound of the towering stone door, it opened.

A pond appeared ahead of the stone door.

Kooguguguguugugu-Boom!

The stone door closed tightly shut with a loud crash. I guess it had no plans of opening again. Damn.

Without a choice, I turned to face the pond again.

[Please enter.]

Damn.

No. Fuck, Why are you doing this to me, like really.

I remembered everything that was shared on the Community chat in regards to the boss room.

But apart from that, there was nothing about this fucking unbalanced difficulty of a boss room.

The theme of the Hell difficulty 1st floor was arrow traps.

So I predicted, based on the information given on the Community chat, that the boss room would be related to these types of traps.

I was dead right.

The walls and ceilings were packed with arrow traps.

Except I had one little error.

The pond right in front of me.

A lava pond.

With temperatures that was high enough that it looked like it would cook my skin instantly, my heart felt like it was being squeezed as I gazed upon it.

These crazy shits.

There were 9 circular stone bridges.

They were arranged as a 3 by 3 formation. The 9 stone bridges were separated with equal distance, roughly 2 metres apart.

The bridges weren't even flat.

The stone was carved with a round surface and the texture was smooth.

Man, who would even call this shit stone a 'bridge'.

However just before, a message appeared for me to enter, asking to stand on those bridges.

[1st floor stage, Welcome to the final gateway. The trial begins the instant a step is taken upon the stone bridge connecting the pond together. The trial lasts for 5 minutes.]

[Please enter.]

Inside I was constantly muttering fuckfuckfuck, but the message never appeared again.

The good thing was, I could easily grasp the whole trial.

Like how the traps were right there in the open, it was pretty obvious.

Firstly, a lava pond where I would instantly die if I fell into it.

Secondly, 9 stone bridges that were hard to balance yourself on with the round surfaces.

Lastly, a shit ton of arrow traps packed with barely any space in between them on the walls and ceiling.

This trial was obviously about dodging the arrows for 5 minutes on the stone bridges without falling.

I couldn't just drag out the time any longer, so I jumped lightly onto the closest rock.

I ducked in anticipation of an arrow flying towards me as soon as I set foot on the bridge.

Luckily, although the stone was shiny like it was waxed, it wasn't all so slippery.

Due to the round shape of the stone, there wasn't enough area for me to stand on with both feet, but it was enough to stand on one foot comfortably.

[The trial will begin in 30 seconds.]

Oh ok. Thanks for letting me know.

Chapter 13 - Tutorial 1st Floor (Part 7)

[The trial will begin in 30 seconds]

There was apparently 30 seconds to go until the damned trial began.

Sigh.

First, I jumped to the rock in the centre.

2 metres.

My body had become somewhat abnormal thanks to the modification from the stats and skills. Making a 2m jump while standing still was an easy feat.

But still, the fact that one slip would result in my death from the lava made my heart quiver a little.

Phew, I managed to land on the centre rock with my right foot.

I was afraid that my body might lose balance during the landing but surprisingly, I managed to stay balanced.

Of course my heart was in a state of great disturbance.

Among the rocks which were positioned in a 3x3 formation, I stood in the centre and remembered the position of the other rocks without mistake.

And,

Ping!

An arrow flew without warning.

Huak.

Bending my knee, I barely dodged the arrow that was coming towards my face.

Standing on this circular rock made dodging arrows a difficult task.

So, I can't just dodge the arrows as easily as I thought.

Ping!

There were some arrows that made loud noises.

These arrows usually fly much faster, and on impact, would be more lethal.

I had to dodge these arrows.

If I block it with my shield, I'll fly backward from the impact.

Tik.

But I can't dodge all the arrows.

I couldn't maintain a proper stance while trying to dodge the arrows at the same time..

With no other choice left, I raised my shield and deflected the incoming arrow with the edge of my shield.

It's a very difficult technique for a novice who has never had proper training, and using it made me sweat on my back every time.

I managed to get a shield skill from deflecting some of the arrows while evading all the others.

[Basic Shield Skill Lv.2]

Whad'ya know, its level 2 already.

All this time I thought it was the action and how much the action is performed that was basis of skill formation.

But within an extremely stressful situation, the shield skill grew rapidly in such a short time.

And I'm surviving thanks to that.

There was no end to the arrows..

Rather than dodging or blocking them, I jumped backward.

A backspin.

I flew without even looking back, but I was quite confident of myself.

Confident that I wouldn't slip on the landing.

I figured out something since the boss room trial began.

That Heightened Senses was an incredibly overpowered skill.

Heightened senses not only improved sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing, but also it also included all the other senses that a

human may have.

If my sense of balance wasn't enhanced from the multiple tries of the rope trap before, I would have fallen in the lava a long time ago.

And if I didn't have the bonus from the Heightened Senses skill which improved not just the 5 senses, but also balance, direction and body control, I would be swimming in the lava.

I landed perfectly on the rock 2m behind me.

I twisted my waist to dodge the arrow that was fired when I landed.

My balance was shaken, but I managed to recover by swinging my arms.

Hiss

Damn it!

My clothes was caught on fire.

I don't even remember when it happened.

Was it when I jumped to the other rock, or when I ducked to

dodge the arrow?

Anyway it didnt matter anymore, the moment it touched the lava it was set ablaze..

Ping, ping, ping.

Did they know that I was on fire?

The number of oncoming arrows suddenly increased.

I wanted to cut the clothes, or rub it or do anything to get the fire under control, but with these arrows, I didn't have a chance to.

As I dodged the arrows forcefully, the flames on my clothing became larger and larger.

"Uaaaah! FU! CK!"

I moved to the rock on the right as I screamed.

The arrows were getting to the point where it was impossible to dodge them while standing still.

I had to continuously move to dodge them.

Meanwhile, the flames continued to grow and was already

burning my torso.

I have heard that the worst pain a human could feel was from a burn.

Nothing could top the excruciating pain from being burned alive in this hell of arrows.

If only my senses were dulled.

I was desperate to lose consciousness.

But the moment I lose my focus, I'd fall into the lava and perish.

[You have received Pain Resistance Lv.9]

[You have received Burn Resistance Lv.1]

I've thought to myself multiple times, but these resistance skills are useless.

Pain was still pain, damn it.

These resistance skills improved the body and the mind's Resistance, but not lessen the pain.

The fire was now spread around my entire shirt.

The thick smoke began to shoot up my face.

I couldn't think straight as the smoke began to sting my eyes and nose.

My mind fell into misery from the sudden encroaching of death.

As I leapt toward the rock in front of me, I ripped the shirt with my strength.

And because of that, I lost my balance from the landing, and an arrow pierced my right arm as I tried to regain my balance.

It's alright.

I could still take it.

They said the trap will continue for 5 minutes.

Its a death trap full of lava, but I'm doing rather well.

I only got hit once at this point in time.

Ting-

I deflected another arrow.

Good news!

And there is also a bad news.

My ankle caught fire.

I kneww for sure now.

The damn lava made anything that got close to it, even without direct contact, catch fire.

Damn it, there's no way I could take my pants off amidst the barrage of arrows. It was impossible.

My only choice was to continue while withstanding the pain from the burns.

Man, how much time had past?

I'm sure it had already been 5 minutes.

But the traps didn't seem like it was going to stop any time soon.

The entire world seemed to move slow.

The flying arrows, and the shield trying to block the arrows.

Even the bubbles forming on the lava.

As the world began to slow down in my mind, my vision became wider.

Was it similar to how professional sports players felt when they were extremely focused.

Or was it similar to the vision of death where you see your past flash before your eyes.

Only after a few minutes of the trap and I was already on death's doorstep from each passing moment.

A flying arrow.

The arrow was aimed at my stomach.

Calmly, with no hesitation, I deflected it with my shield.

There was no impact in the process.

I managed to redirect all force the arrow had in it.

Now I looked for the next one.

It was coming straight inbetween my eyes.

Large movements were dangerous.

I bent my neck and shoulder with as minimal movement as possible.

My lower body hardly moved.

I was confident that I would dodge that arrow.

I watched the arrow fly past me as I tilted my head.

From the tip, to the shaft, to its feathers.

I could see everything clearly in this slow world.

If it was a baseball instead of an arrow, I felt like I could see all the individual strings on it.

Once the arrow finally flew past the side of my head, I looked for the next arrow.

There were no more.

The pain was still there, but the flames on my pants were gone.

The lava below my feet began to disappear, slowly.

The wall opposite to where I came from crumbled, making a path.

This really was a bridge huh.

Jumping across the few rocks, I headed towards the path.

[Congratulations. You have cleared the Tutorial, Hell difficulty, Floor 1.]

[All status effects and injuries are healed.]

[You have received 1000 points for clearing the floor.]

[You have received 1000 points for being the first to clear the floor.]

[There is a god that has taken interest in you. You have received 500 points.]

[You will receive additional reward proportional to your play record.]

[You have received Wind Spirit's Protection Lv.1]

[Please continue.]

My entire body shone with light and all injuries were healed, as if I had leveled up.

I've done it.

At the same time, multiple messages appeared before my eyes.

If I were to continue, I had to go through this path.

Before pressing on, I should check first.

Status Window.

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv.6

Strength: 12

Dexterity: 31

Endurance: 16

Mana: 22

Skills: Battle Concentration Lv.7, Willpower Lv.3, Awakening Lv.1, Night Vision Lv.2, Light Radius/Eye Lights Lv.1, Sprint Lv.1, Heightened Senses Lv.3, Basic Swordsmanship Lv.1, Cut Lv.1, Basic Shield Skill Lv.2, Wind Spirit's Protection Lv.1, Pain Resistance Lv.9, Bleed resistance Lv.4, Stun Resistance Lv.1, Piercing Resistance Lv.1, Burn Resistance Lv.1

Extra: God of Adventure has taken an interest in you.

My level didn't increase among all that.

Shouldn't you atleast be given one for effort.

The new skills I received were Shield Skill and Burn Resistance.

Furthermore, Pain Resistance leveled up.

And the reward for clearing Floor 1, Wind Spirit's Protection.

From what I've seen in Community, most additional prizes were potions, consumable scrolls or items such as accessories.

I had never heard of receiving skills as a reward.

As it stated, the reward was proportional to the play record. It seemed all the bullshit that I've went through weren't for nothing afterall.

[Wind Spirit's Protection Lv.1]

Description: A newly born Wind Spirit's protection is with you.

Dexterity +10

Although the skill's effect was just an increase of Dexterity by 10, it was still an incredible help.

Considering that stat rewards for level ups ranged from 1 to 4, an increase of 10 was quite significant.

I closed the window, and continued down the dark path.

As my body began to relax from all the stress, my limbs were

being dragged as if I were exhausted, even when I should have been fully healed.

A message appeared and I quietly replied, enter.

After a moment's feeling like I was afloat, I arrived on green plains.

What was this?

It looked like The Hobbit Village from Lord of the Rings.

And on the very plains was a girl in a white onepiece dress, crouching.

The girl was...

"A rabbit?"

Chapter 14 - Tutorial 1st Floor (Part 7)

[The trial will begin in 30 seconds]

There was apparently 30 seconds to go until the damned trial began.

Sigh.

First, I jumped to the rock in the centre.

2 metres.

My body had become somewhat abnormal thanks to the modification from the stats and skills. Making a 2m jump while standing still was an easy feat.

But still, the fact that one slip would result in my death from the lava made my heart quiver a little.

Phew, I managed to land on the centre rock with my right foot.

I was afraid that my body might lose balance during the landing but surprisingly, I managed to stay balanced.

Of course my heart was in a state of great disturbance.

Among the rocks which were positioned in a 3x3 formation, I stood in the centre and remembered the position of the other rocks without mistake.

And,

Ping!

An arrow flew without warning.

Huak.

Bending my knee, I barely dodged the arrow that was coming towards my face.

Standing on this circular rock made dodging arrows a difficult task.

So, I can't just dodge the arrows as easily as I thought.

Ping!

There were some arrows that made loud noises.

These arrows usually fly much faster, and on impact, would be more lethal.

I had to dodge these arrows.

If I block it with my shield, I'll fly backward from the impact.

Tik.

But I can't dodge all the arrows.

I couldn't maintain a proper stance while trying to dodge the arrows at the same time..

With no other choice left, I raised my shield and deflected the incoming arrow with the edge of my shield.

It's a very difficult technique for a novice who has never had proper training, and using it made me sweat on my back every time.

I managed to get a shield skill from deflecting some of the arrows while evading all the others.

[Basic Shield Skill Lv.2]

Whad'ya know, its level 2 already.

All this time I thought it was the action and how much the action is performed that was basis of skill formation.

But within an extremely stressful situation, the shield skill grew rapidly in such a short time.

And I'm surviving thanks to that.

There was no end to the arrows..

Rather than dodging or blocking them, I jumped backward.

A backspin.

I flew without even looking back, but I was quite confident of myself.

Confident that I wouldn't slip on the landing.

I figured out something since the boss room trial began.

That Heightened Senses was an incredibly overpowered skill.

Heightened senses not only improved sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing, but also it also included all the other senses that a

human may have.

If my sense of balance wasn't enhanced from the multiple tries of the rope trap before, I would have fallen in the lava a long time ago.

And if I didn't have the bonus from the Heightened Senses skill which improved not just the 5 senses, but also balance, direction and body control, I would be swimming in the lava.

I landed perfectly on the rock 2m behind me.

I twisted my waist to dodge the arrow that was fired when I landed.

My balance was shaken, but I managed to recover by swinging my arms.

Hiss

Damn it!

My clothes was caught on fire.

I don't even remember when it happened.

Was it when I jumped to the other rock, or when I ducked to

dodge the arrow?

Anyway it didnt matter anymore, the moment it touched the lava it was set ablaze..

Ping, ping, ping.

Did they know that I was on fire?

The number of oncoming arrows suddenly increased.

I wanted to cut the clothes, or rub it or do anything to get the fire under control, but with these arrows, I didn't have a chance to.

As I dodged the arrows forcefully, the flames on my clothing became larger and larger.

"Uaaaah! FU! CK!"

I moved to the rock on the right as I screamed.

The arrows were getting to the point where it was impossible to dodge them while standing still.

I had to continuously move to dodge them.

Meanwhile, the flames continued to grow and was already

burning my torso.

I have heard that the worst pain a human could feel was from a burn.

Nothing could top the excruciating pain from being burned alive in this hell of arrows.

If only my senses were dulled.

I was desperate to lose consciousness.

But the moment I lose my focus, I'd fall into the lava and perish.

[You have received Pain Resistance Lv.9]

[You have received Burn Resistance Lv.1]

I've thought to myself multiple times, but these resistance skills are useless.

Pain was still pain, damn it.

These resistance skills improved the body and the mind's Resistance, but not lessen the pain.

The fire was now spread around my entire shirt.

The thick smoke began to shoot up my face.

I couldn't think straight as the smoke began to sting my eyes and nose.

My mind fell into misery from the sudden encroaching of death.

As I leapt toward the rock in front of me, I ripped the shirt with my strength.

And because of that, I lost my balance from the landing, and an arrow pierced my right arm as I tried to regain my balance.

It's alright.

I could still take it.

They said the trap will continue for 5 minutes.

Its a death trap full of lava, but I'm doing rather well.

I only got hit once at this point in time.

Ting-

I deflected another arrow.

Good news!

And there is also a bad news.

My ankle caught fire.

I kneww for sure now.

The damn lava made anything that got close to it, even without direct contact, catch fire.

Damn it, there's no way I could take my pants off amidst the barrage of arrows. It was impossible.

My only choice was to continue while withstanding the pain from the burns.

Man, how much time had past?

I'm sure it had already been 5 minutes.

But the traps didn't seem like it was going to stop any time soon.

The entire world seemed to move slow.

The flying arrows, and the shield trying to block the arrows.

Even the bubbles forming on the lava.

As the world began to slow down in my mind, my vision became wider.

Was it similar to how professional sports players felt when they were extremely focused.

Or was it similar to the vision of death where you see your past flash before your eyes.

Only after a few minutes of the trap and I was already on death's doorstep from each passing moment.

A flying arrow.

The arrow was aimed at my stomach.

Calmly, with no hesitation, I deflected it with my shield.

There was no impact in the process.

I managed to redirect all force the arrow had in it.

Now I looked for the next one.

It was coming straight inbetween my eyes.

Large movements were dangerous.

I bent my neck and shoulder with as minimal movement as possible.

My lower body hardly moved.

I was confident that I would dodge that arrow.

I watched the arrow fly past me as I tilted my head.

From the tip, to the shaft, to its feathers.

I could see everything clearly in this slow world.

If it was a baseball instead of an arrow, I felt like I could see all the individual strings on it.

Once the arrow finally flew past the side of my head, I looked for

the next arrow.

There were no more.

The pain was still there, but the flames on my pants were gone.

The lava below my feet began to disappear, slowly.

The wall opposite to where I came from crumbled, making a path.

This really was a bridge huh.

Jumping across the few rocks, I headed towards the path.

[Congratulations. You have cleared the Tutorial, Hell difficulty, Floor 1.]

[All status effects and injuries are healed.]

[You have received 1000 points for clearing the floor.]

[You have received 1000 points for being the first to clear the floor.]

[There is a god that has taken interest in you. You have

received 500 points.]

[You will receive additional reward proportional to your play record.]

[You have received Wind Spirit's Protection Lv.1]

[Please continue.]

My entire body shone with light and all injuries were healed, as if I had leveled up.

I've done it.

At the same time, multiple messages appeared before my eyes.

If I were to continue, I had to go through this path.

Before pressing on, I should check first.

Status Window.

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv.6

Strength: 12

Dexterity: 31

Endurance: 16

Mana: 22

Skills: Battle Concentration Lv.7, Willpower Lv.3, Awakening Lv.1, Night Vision Lv.2, Light Radius/Eye Lights Lv.1, Sprint Lv.1, Heightened Senses Lv.3, Basic Swordsmanship Lv.1, Cut Lv.1, Basic Shield Skill Lv.2, Wind Spirit's Protection Lv.1, Pain Resistance Lv.9, Bleed resistance Lv.4, Stun Resistance Lv.1, Piercing Resistance Lv.1, Burn Resistance Lv.1

Extra: God of Adventure has taken an interest in you.

My level didn't increase among all that.

Shouldn't you atleast be given one for effort.

The new skills I received were Shield Skill and Burn Resistance.

Furthermore, Pain Resistance leveled up.

And the reward for clearing Floor 1, Wind Spirit's Protection.

From what I've seen in Community, most additional prizes were

potions, consumable scrolls or items such as accessories.

I had never heard of receiving skills as a reward.

As it stated, the reward was proportional to the play record. It seemed all the bullshit that I've went through weren't for nothing afterall.

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A message appeared and I quietly replied, enter.

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What was this?

It looked like The Hobbit Village from Lord of the Rings.

And on the very plains was a girl in a white onepiece dress, crouching.

The girl was...

"A rabbit?"

Chapter 15 - Tutorial 1st Floor (Part 8)

[You have cleared the 1st Floor.]

[Auction Window and Store Window has been unlocked.]

As I stood upon the grassy plains which stretched beyond the horizon, new messages appeared before me.

Store and Auction window.

There has been some information in the Community about them.

I'll get to details about it later.

First, I needed to solve my unanswered questions.

I couldn't hold my curiosity for the crouching girl in the white one piece dress any longer.

She even had rabbit ears on her small head.

"Rabbit?"

The rabbit... the girl twitched her ears at my words,

then hopped her way towards me like a rabbit.

I was puzzled by her rabbit like movement and before I even realised, she reached in front of me and spread her chest wide and shouted.

"That's right! A rabbit!"

I could see the feeling of pride in her wide smile.

I never would have thought that the word rabbit was such an amazing compliment.

I thought it was usually used as an insult to males.

"Are you a rabbit? Or a...human?"

"Rabbit!"

Okay, I got it.

If I had to determine what she was... she was a rabbit that looked like a human, rather than just a human with rabbit ears.

Still, her figure heavily resembled a humanoid.

Well, the most important fact was not what she is, but who she was.

The master of the area who appeared right after the boss room.

According to those in the Community, they were existances like Merchant NPCs.

They provided information, and sold items using the points that were obtained from clearing the Tutorial.

In Easy difficulty, it was an old mage that appeared.

In Normal difficulty, a pale man who looked like a vampire.

In Hard difficulty, it was a giant who was more than 3m tall.

Those are the informations about them that were posted on the Community

But in Hell difficulty it's some girl with rabbit ears.

As I was contemplating how to accept the situation, the girl asked a question.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Lee Ho Jae. A human."

I wasn't sure if I had to mention my race which was visually evident, but I did it anyway.

"Lee Ho Jae? Leeeee-Hojaee? Hooooojae? That's a name?"

"Yes."

The girl grabbed onto her stomach and began to laugh at my reply.

She even fell to the ground and began to roll about.

Damn. I really wanted to smack her.

Watching her giggle away like that reminded me of that rude nephew of mine.

"Hoojaee? HooJaee! Kyahahahaha. That's your name?"

The girl's fanatical laughter lasted for a long time.

I simply sat down and watched the girl giggle away on the ground.

She might be rude and have rabbit ears but even so, she had a

cute face.

And, beyond those white legs and the short skirt of the one piece dress was...

Um. Anyway.

Her laughter didn't feel so mean anymore, perhaps because of the good eye candy I saw.

Yep. Very good. Why don't you raise those legs up abit more.

After her long laughter, she suddenly stopped with a serious face.

Then she crouched, just like when I first saw her.

The way she sat was really similar to how a rabbit sat.

Then...

Hop hop

With a face stiff as stone, she began to hop about like a rabbit.

My mind went blank when she started to move about in the plains. It was like she didn't care about me, as if she had forgotten about everything.

I was at a loss for words.

Ah, yes. It was a similar behaviour to the puppy I had raised when I was a kid.

It's just like she said, she must be closer to rabbit than human.

Especially in the head.

"Hey! What's your name?"

I shouted towards the girl who was quite a distance away now.

It looked like she managed to hear me, as she started to hop in my direction.

I'm feeling a bit of Déjà vu here.

"I'm Kirikiri!"

Kirikiri?

"Kirikiri? That's your name?"

"Yep!"

You have guts to laugh at my name, when yours is Kirikiri.

That was what I wanted to say, but seeing that proud and satisfied smile on her child like face, made it impossible.

"I see. Kirikiri, don't you have some things you need to tell me?"

"I do!"

"Then tell me."

"OK!"

Her level of intelligence really was at the level of a puppy, a puppy that could talk.

"Congrats! You can use the store and auction windows!"

"Store and Auction windows?"

"Yep!"

[You cannot use the Auction Window. Please try again in the Waiting room or Residential areas]

[Store Window]

The Store opened and multiple messages in separate categories popped up.

It seems I can buy objects using the points I've received by clearing the 1st floor.

Equipments, books, food, beds as well. They even have toys.

All sorts of items were sold in the Store.

Kirikiri began to pull at my sleeves as I glanced through the items in the Store.

"If you have something to buy, you have to buy now!"

"Why?"

"The items sold in the Waiting Room are useless for combat!"

I'm beginning to understand why the people who appeared after bossrooms are called Merchant NPCs, despite the fact that the Store could be used even in the Waiting rooms.

Combat items could only be bought from here.

My weapons are still usable.

The shield does turn into a rag after blocking a few arrows, but it could still perform its function.

Since items are fully repaired when entering the Waiting Room, there is no reason to switch it right now.

The sword was... well, I've never got the chance to use it properly so far.

Anyway, this might take a while.

There were so many items listed on the Store that it would take a whole day to go through all of them.

"Hey Kirikiri. I have a question."

"What is it?"

"What happens when you fail to clear the 1st Floor after 30 days?"

"You go back to the Waiting Room."

My face froze when those words came.

I thought that would not be possible.

"Then you can stay safe even if you don't clear the 1st floor?"

"Uum... Well."

"Don't try to brush it off, give me the details."

"When the first Round ends, all jerkies and water in the inventory disappears. After that, your only way of getting food is to use the points you accumulated to buy food from the Store. Even if you don't clear the floor, you will still receive some points when the Round ends, but the amount you get corresponds to how far you ventured in the tutorial. In the end, you have to challenge the Tutorial."

I understood after that explanation.

"Of course, you don't feel any hunger when you're in the Waiting Room, but as you know."

"You are kicked out from the Waiting Room after 24 hours."

"Yep, that's right."

"Then..."

"No."

Kirikiri suddenly closed her eyes tightly as she pulled her ears down.

What's going on now.

"I can't tell you."

"Why?"

What could she not do, and what could she not say?

"My job is to provide advice to players who manage to reach here."

Oh really now. Could you even do it? Wouldn't it be hard for you?

"But there's a limit. I can only tell those who have potential, who have achieved great results and those that I like."

"But, you've been telling me a lot of stuff now."

"Yep. we only have 1 left! So don't ask anymore. I have something

to tell you."

Damn, was there a limit to how many questions that could be asked? There were many things I wanted to ask.

What was the Tutorial for and what was its goal.

The reason and why I was invited.

Returning to our real world, how and the chances.

Kirikiri's identity.

There were countless questions.

Thankfully, as long as i'm not over the limit, I can ask most of these questions.

I will have to wait until our next meeting to ask those questions.

"Whooo... Is that so. Thanks. So, what did you want to tell me?"

Wait, I didn't waste one of my questions, because you just explained your role in here right?

I thought if I asked, I would lose my last chance, so I kept my mouth shut.

"Buy status effect potions!"

"Status effects?"

Status effects are effects which cause abnormal condition on the mind or the body such as confusion, stun, fear, burn, frostbite, poison, diseases and the like.

They are usually considered as crowd control effects in a normal game.

"How much do I need?"

"Lots of them! As much as possible!"

Being told by Kirikiri that I needed an abundance of potions in all sorts of varieties, I could imagine the theme of the 2nd Floor's stage.

Must be a festival of status effects.

My resistance skills was going to rise again. Ahahaha.

As advised by Kirikiri, I bought all sorts of potions and a few items on top.

When I was buying the items, Kirikiri gave a brief description and her opinions of them, it was a great help.

I asked Kirikiri if she was allowed to do this, she replied that simple explanations about items in the Store are possible.

Kirikiri's eyes shined brightly whenever she explained about the items.

She must like helping or teaching others.

Or, maybe, she likes to show how knowledgeable she was.

"Umm... I have one last question. Kirikiri."

"No!"

Once again Kirikiri pulled her ears down and shut her eyes tightly.

Could you really not hear anything when doing that?

"What happens to those who die in the Tutorial?"

Her eyes started to open slowly.

Kirikiri didn't speak a word.

But, she didn't have to.

Instead of the usual lights of life that shone in her eyes, there was only sadness and pity in it's place.

I opened my mouth to speak, but no words came.

After taking deep breaths, I was able to finally speak her name.

"Kirikiri."

"Yes..."

"Thanks for helping me with the shopping. I'll head off now."

"O, Okay!"

As I respond to the message about travelling to the Waiting Room, lights shone around my body and I felt myself float.

My vision started to go hazy white, I thought I saw Kirikiri hopping about and waving her hand.

"Goodbye! Come back soon! Don't die!"

Chapter 16 - Tutorial Floor 60 (Part 3)

As usual I was humming to myself as I was walking through the empty residential district.

This was the good thing about being along.

There was no one to comment if I was tone deaf or couldn't keep the beat. Hahahahahah.

I went to the outdoor café that I've been going to a lot recently.

I took a seat and ordered.

‘One caramel macchiato please.’

My points were deducted and a caramel macchiato appeared in front of my eyes.

Nice. Really nice.

I'm starting to taste the feeling of life these days.

Instead of feeling despair and powerless every day, it was filled with hope and excitement although I was alone and I couldn't go any further.

This was all thanks to the newbie Lee Yeon Hee who entered the hell difficulty 30 days ago with the start of the 81st Attempt.

These days my time passes as I think of her day by day.

What can I do to help her grow stronger more efficiently?

Are there any other safer roads she can take?

What if she gets real unlucky and just dies?

I had daily thoughts of her with a certain worry and also an expectation.

I needed to help her even just a little to make sure that her growth was safe and efficient.

Hence, I gathered all the information I had seen on the Community chat and made a small guideline fit for her.

She was growing stronger by the minute, faster than anyone that had entered since the Tutorial's 1st Attempt. If we took a look at her growth rate, she's probably growing stronger faster than I did when I was attempting this during the 1st attempt.

But of course, she has the information that I didn't know back then, but this didn't mean that she didn't have much ability as me to get stronger.

Actually, she was overwhelmingly superior to me in that sense.

When I entered this place during the first attempt, I was a nobody with small muscle mass from atrophy of the muscles. I wasn't that fit either, at the best it was just subpar average.

She on the other hand was a professional archer.

On top of that, she was Korea's national representative, a qualification that is rumoured to be harder to get than the Olympic gold medal.

Basically her muscle mass, stamina, flexibility and reflexes were much more superior than mine.

Although archery itself is not a sport that requires large movements, if you get to the professional level, your basic training would be much more intense than a normal person.

On top of that, the concentration, ability to think, originality, ability to make decision, motivation to challenge, mind control etc... Her mental stat would be amazing.

Due to the large psychological impact of the sport, I heard that the archery national representatives have a special training to become numb to such distractions.

She would know highly of bio feedback and even thinking routines and active routines.

It may be hard to think of a programme like an actual professional, but she should have some experience so her ability to relate certain training programmes and apply them would be exceptional.

What was even better was that she had the determination and motivation to clear the Tutorial too.

Although she did disregard my aid in getting the tolerance skills and ability to tank hits to help aid with training, she takes into account most of the advice I give her. She's using this to the best of her advantage by applying them to her own training practices and planning of growing to clear the Tutorial.

The best. Perfect.

This wasn't something that could simply be done just by relying on superior specs.

The multiple sports players, fighters, and even special agents that were dragged into this tutorial world. How many of the gifted and talented have been killed here?

Even those so called 'specialists' couldn't ensure their survival in Hard difficulty.

Let's not bring in Hell difficulty here, where the difference is off the scales...

With no relation to the outcome, the fact that she cleared the 1st floor proved that she was smart and had promising talent.

Of course just clearing the 1st floor doesn't assure your safety for what's to come.

Even with all that said, clearing the 1st floor doesn't mean that you're prepared enough for what's to come.

A plenty number of people had died on floors higher than the first, nothing was to be taken for granted.

But I couldn't help it. I was excited about Lee Yeon Hee's arrival, maybe a little bit too excited. Clearing the 1st floor and the progress she was making to grow stronger was evident, it was plenty to keep my hopes up.

‘Five cookie gift sets.’

My points were deducted and 5 boxes of cookies wrapped in pink wrapping paper appeared.

This was perfect.

I took out the bag I had prepared in my inventory.

I put the cookie set in the bag and checked what was in the bag once again.

A light leather armour set with no specifications required.

A finger tab and arm-guard for archers.

A necklace that amplified intelligence and protected the mental status.

Rings that had useful everyday skills.

A one-use warm lunchbox set and a variety of drinks.

Thin clothes and underwear to wear underneath the armour.

Basic toiletry and a high quality sleeping bag.

A mirror, perfume and cosmetics.

100 quotes to boost motivation and a poetry book that was good to read before going to sleep.

A rubiks cube and other mentally stimulating devices.

I made sure that I didn't send too many items that would protect her.

I didn't want to hinder her growth rate by giving her exceptional equipment from the start.

She has to grow as much as she could in the lower levels. Otherwise, it will be hard for her stay alive in the later floors.

Although there was the potential to clear the other floors with some of these overpowered items, it had its limits. Nothing was guaranteed in Hell difficulty.

There were more than just traps to threaten the players stuck in the Tutorial.

Horror, anxiety, loneliness, the list goes on.

The number of people that fell due to mental problems were numerous.

Due to this, I chose to gather equipment that would lessen the stress she was experiencing.

Would it be enough?

If it was a guy I would have even sent maybe a porn magazine.

I wasn't too sure what to send to a girl.

Would it be ok to send her a vibrator?

As I was thinking of this, a message appeared.

[Park Jung Ah: Aren't you going to say anything?]

Park Jung Ah.

One of the few girls I knew.

The leader of the JaGyeongDan which was a group who kept public order and law in this place.

[Lee Ho Jae: Hell difficulty 60th floor. No problems here. I mean, it would be weird if there were any problems. You know there's only me in this place, why do I have to do this every week?]

I too was a member of JaGyeongDan.

Evidently, I didn't really do much.

[Park Jung Ah: Are you saying that it's ok to be late every month just because you don't want to do that?]

I mean, it wasn't a big deal.

I wanted to talk to her anyway.

I talked to her about the vibrator that I was about to send to the newbie and asked Park Jung Ah if it was ok.

[Park Jung Ah: Of course you can't, you retard!]

It was pretty expensive.

It wasn't something a newbie that just cleared the 1st floor could buy easily with their points.

[Park Jung Ah: It doesn't matter if it is expensive you fuckwit.]

It's important to relieve yourself from your sexual desires.

You can get positive results physically and mentally. Not only does it help you relieve stress, it can also help with depression.

What do I do?

Should I at least send her a glue stick?

[Park Jung Ad: You're a pervert I swear...]

"Auction."

I opened the Auction tab and listed the bag.

The opening bid was 77 points.

When you send a gift to a person through the Auction tab, the starting bid was always 77 points.

Although there were times where people who bid on items for 77 points just to disrupt this unofficial method of gifting, but it wasn't too common.

There is a law passed down by the JaGyeongDan stating that disrupting the sending of gifts was illegal. If such an act were to be committed 3 times and the person does not apologise or compensate for it, the person goes on the Wanted List.

When you're on the Wanted List, you're liable to be arrested when stepping into any JaGyeongDan territory.

And of course, it goes without saying that you get punished.

Due to the tutorial's distinct characteristics, the punishments the JaGyeongDan performed were standardised.

With no relation to law, once an outlaw was captured, they get sent to a waiting room or a residential area for a JaGyeongDan

representative to lay judgement.

Judgement could vary from imprisonment to the death penalty.

The judgement is strict and fair. Luckily, there hasn't been anyone in JaGyeongDan who has attempted to manipulate the laws to their advantage.

However, these were rules that were easy to use for one's self gain. There were many times where people of the JaGyeongDan complained that these rules were too loose, however they have never been changed once.

The reason for this was to plant a seed of doubt into the minds of the people, hence preventing crime.

I agreed to this point.

During the time of the Tutorial's inception, there were a lot of assault and rape victims.

Most of them were underage and elderly women.

But now, the elderly and women could grow through the Tutorial and become superhuman.

As you go up floor by floor, members of the JaGyeongDan could be seen stationed in waiting rooms. The number of members

varied, from 3 to a maximum of 20 people. If it weren't for this, then perhaps chaos and anarchy may have continued up to now.

As long as these responsible people are part of the JaGyeongDan, then the rules, laws and punishments were always enforced in a proper manner.

‘Hooooo.’

The bag was safely sent to Lee Yeon Hee through the auction tab.

Hopefully this bag will give her some help.

Chapter 17 - Tutorial 2nd Floor, Waiting Room (Part 1)

[Tutorial, Welcome to the 2nd Floor.]

[1st attempt, day 29. 4:40]

[Time left until end of 1st attempt: 43 hours 20 minutes]

It's finally over. For real.

It felt like something that had been constricting my airways deep within my chest had been unwound.

The time left until end of the 1st attempt was 43 hours.

That was still plenty of time before the 2nd attempt would commence.

If I knew it would have ended like this, I would've tried that trap in front of the boss room once more.

Who knew the boss room would be over that quickly?

2nd Floor waiting room.

It didn't seem that different to the waiting room in the first floor.

It was the same stone room.

No, there was one obvious difference.

[Enter the stage?]

This so called 'stage' that the message was referring to would not be to Tutorial's 1st floor.

It will probably take me to the 2nd floor.

This meant that strategies could be developed for the floors above before the attempt timer hit zero.

People in different difficulties would have definitely developed strategies for the 2nd floor.

The first information about clearing the 1st floor was spread around the Community chat at roughly 20 days after the 1st attempt.

Those people who had cleared the floor roughly 9 days earlier wouldn't just be sucking their fingers in the 2nd floor waiting

room.

What if they were able to develop a sufficient strategy for the 2nd floor before the 1st attempt had even finished?

There could even be people who had cleared the 1st and 2nd floors and were even looking at attempting the 3rd floor in the 20-ish days that I've been here.

This would be more than possible for people in the Easy and Normal difficulties.

There was a reward for the person who cleared a floor first.

As for me, I'm the only person left in Hell difficulty so it's obvious who will get it but, what about the other floors?

The ones in the high ranks of every floor would be competing to clear the floor first.

Moreover, those in the higher ranks wouldn't be so willing to share their knowledge in the Community chat.

Although their fight barely relates to me, I still wonder.

If I clear more than one floor in one attempt, what kind of rewards would I get?

Are there extra rewards that could be earned?

I should definitely ask Kirikiri about it after I've finalized my tactics for the 2nd floor.

After summing up my thoughts I wandered around the 2nd floor waiting room.

Was this waiting room ever so slightly larger... oh!

There was a bed in the dark corner of the waiting room.

I guess there was a slight upgrade.

It was old and stained, it even looked like there would be the stench of fungus on it.

But I wasn't in a place to be anal about that.

I threw my body on the bed and instantly my eyes closed themselves.

As my nervousness subsided, my whole body was buried in the soft sheets of the bed.

Damn. What is this? It's so comfortable.

There was much to do.

There was so much to think about.

But... Let's think about after having a deep sleep.

I couldn't beat my exhaustion.

How long did I sleep for?

[1st attempt, day 29, 17:05]

[time left until end of 1st attempt: 30 hours 55 minutes]

Did I sleep for like, 12 hours?

I slept for way too long.

There's so much to do.

I think that was the longest that I've slept ever since I came into the Tutorial.

Was it because I was so relaxed?

I lifted my body and sat on the edge of the bed.

Sigh, what did I have to think about?

Oh, yeah.

My mental state.

If I couldn't even trust my own choices and accept my past mistakes, then there was no chance for survival.

I needed to test my mental state so I that I know that there was nothing wrong with it.

A few days ago, I thought about this when I first discovered the healing well.

At that moment, instead of going to the boss room and clearing the tutorial faster, I went back to the waiting room at the very start to retry the trap.

It was also to improve my stats and skills.

It was a typical gamer's mindset.

It was definitely the right way to grow stronger and improve, but

with that reward came a risk. The pain.

Oh and of course, near death.

Yeah, they could say this was a brave thing to do, to walk the road of pain. One that was painted so obvious. Just because it was the most efficient path.

However, you could actually die while walking.

If the chances of staying alive from that was lower than the chances of living with no purpose, and a person still walked that road without hesitation... you could say that person was retarded.

Am I retarded?

Am I still not able to grasp the reality I am in and still thought of this as a game?

After falling into the Tutorial, my dedication had also changed a lot.

Before coming here, I was always just drinking and watching TV.

I didn't feel any sort of rush towards life and I couldn't entertain myself enough to put aside the boring life of mine. So I always fell asleep slightly tipsy.

Without a doubt, if time passed a little longer, I would've been an alcoholic.

I thought that just dying somewhere other than home wouldn't be too bad either.

There was no meaning or motivation to my life.

But look at me now.

I'm looking ahead and running towards it.

I wasn't even thinking about the pain or the safety of my life.

I was able to feel the excitement and anticipation that I had forgotten since I came here.

I worked day and night for one game when I was a pro gamer.

And on the day of the match.

The prize-money, the glory that victory awarded me for all the effort I put into the game. My future changed due to the outcome. The fans that cheered me on, their anticipation, hell even the squad and the problems with sponsors.

I put all that on the line and played against my opponent.

Others may label that as just childish play, but for me it was having a duel on a single log bridge.

It was a cold and brutal battle, but that was the life I loved living.

Even if I lost, even if I fell from the top, If I stayed in the world of gaming, if I was able to feel the spark I felt through nervousness and victory...

I've regretted ever since. How I longed for it, drinking day by day.

And at that moment, enthusiasm was given to me once more.

At that moment, I knew.

Pain or death, it didn't matter for me.

I was like a craved drug addict, and this time I got my hands on some.

Without caring for side-effects, I just enjoyed the rush and pleasure.

It was time for my personal diagnosis.

Mmm... it wasn't bad.

There wasn't anything wrong in my head.

My current mental state would actually be of great help to my growth.

This abnormal enthusiasm wasn't going to stop me, but would instead be the fuel that would bring me forth.

Let's sum everything up positively. It felt like my heart and even my body had gotten so much lighter.

On to the next thing in my to-do list.

“Shop.”

As I opened the shop, like Kirikiri had said, all equipment, potions and essentially any item that would be useful for battle were all locked and only food and lifestyle items were the only items available.

Thanks to Kirikiri's advice, I had already bought all the necessary items earlier.

I took out clothes that I purchased with Kirikiri.

I was pretty much half naked the whole time.

My clothes were stained with blood and it had holes everywhere where the arrows had struck me. Moreover, due to the fire in the boss room it was all ragged and in tatters.

Spending points on just normal clothes instead of equipment that would give me beneficial stats felt a little off, but it was better than staying naked so.

Although there was no beneficial effect provided from the comfortable, thin, white t-shirt and sweat pants, it actually felt quite good when worn.

It felt like going from barbarism to civilization.

“Auction.”

Oh, this was quite fascinating.

People who had cleared the 1st floor were able to buy and sell items in the Auction tab.

Most of the items listed were beginner items and the extra rewards gained from clearing the 1st floor.

They were weapons that wasn't suitable for the owner or was just plain useless.

In all of those, there were also stuff like this.

[Cat collar with a bell]

Description: Cat's don't like this. If you try force this on your cat, even if you are its owner, it may show its claws.

Kyaaaa! What an amazing item.

I can't believe they gave you that shit as a reward.

I could only laugh because it was someone else's, if that shit was mine I would've just thrown it away on the spot.

I checked the Community chat and it seemed that extra rewards were completely random.

Even if you clear with significant results (as the author of this post claims), you could get a shitty item, and even if you clear just barely, you could get a godlike item.

Well. The messages said that the extra rewards were given based on your play history.

It could just be an excuse from the people who got shitty items.

Since it hadn't been that long, there weren't enough examples to make a conclusion.

I'll be able to tell when I check later.

Now, the last key problem.

The problem which was to check the 2nd floor before the 1st attempt ended.

Chapter 18 - Tutorial 2nd Floor, Waiting Room (Part 2)

[1st attempt, day 29. 17:15]

[Time left until end of 1st attempt: 30 hours 45 minutes]

Now, let's think.

What are the pros and cons of attempting the 2nd floor with the leftover time?

Well, the pros are obvious...

Even if I don't clear the 2nd floor before the 2nd attempt started, I would still gain knowledge of the 2nd floor.

Moreover, there could be extra bonuses for entering the 2nd floor.

On the other side, let's think about the cons.

The cons were also quite obvious.

Firstly, the danger of entering the 2nd floor.

It was the uncertainty of the challenge on the 2nd floor.

It was too vague.

The bonuses I might gain from entering the 2nd floor or even what kind of dangers lay ahead.

The only thing I learned about it from Kirikiri was one key word, 'Status Ailment'

Let's think calmly.

There had been no information about extra bonuses from clearing the 2nd floor.

Only the assumption that there may be.

I could easily learn about the dangers that might await me if I rush into the 2nd floor.

It could be just dangerous enough to kill me. No more, no less.

Although there was no information, I didn't even need to think about this one. It was a given.

The fact that I could gain knowledge about the 2nd floor wasn't

too appealing to me.

If the attempts reset, there was no certainty that the patterns of the traps would stay that way.

Plus, there was only so much ground that I would be able to cover right now. The rest would only be possible to learn when the 2nd attempt began.

Being up to date with information is always a strong weapon, however I have no competitors to have a race with.

This tutorial was something like a solo marathon for me.

It was important to make sure I managed my pace and went steadily.

If the amount of info I could gain while attempting the 2nd floor lessens, then naturally my approach will become inefficient.

If I were to push my attempt of the 2nd floor to when the 2nd attempt began, I would be able to use my remaining time to learn about other things.

There was only so much that my body could do, it's slowly reaching its limits for a human being.

But still, it was impressive to say that this superhuman body was

achieved in a short time of one month.

There were still areas where I could improve.

I still wasn't able to judge what this new enhanced body was capable of.

After all, my mind was still used to the poor body I've had for the past 20 years of my normal pathetic life.

I had to deeply think about what kind of power I could show with this body and how to use it.

Ok then, let's push the 2nd floor challenge until the 2nd attempt began.

So, should I just start training again?

It felt like I've went back to the beginning, before the 1st attempt began.

Well of course, the difference here was that I was the only person in this 2nd floor waiting room.

Out of the blue, the people from the 1st floor waiting room popped into my head.

Choi Min Sik, Cho Kyeong Min, Park Su Ah.

They were all nice people.

Even I, a person who lacked social skills was able to become friends with them in only 3 days.

I wonder what it would have been like if I met them normally outside of this world?

The thought of not being able to see those people again saddened me.

As I began to picture the three of them, miserable thoughts flooded my mind.

No, I couldn't be like this.

I knew too well that dwelling on misery with a depressed and negative mindset would only hinder the body's concentration and how badly that could turn out to be.

I forced myself to not think of them.

It was because I was lying on this comfortable bed that I was thinking of such fragile thoughts.

I stood up immediately and moved around.

With deep breaths I steadied my breathing.

With many hours of stretching, I deeply observed how much my body had changed with multiple exercises like running, high jump, long jump, push ups, burpees, throwing punches and kicks.

Since I had no knowledge of training my fitness, I just repeated simple movements to compare my current self with my past.

As predicted, the results were unbelievable.

Even those considered superhuman in American football can't compare to what I have achieved with my body.

It revealed so much potential and it was performing above and beyond expectations against what I could see from just the change in my muscle mass and my build in general.

It felt like I could get a gold medal in any sport in the Olympics with this superior body.

This power and speed was definitely at the limits of any human.

It was unbelievable this power was mine. I guess this is how it felt like wearing Iron Man's suit and whizzing around in it.

But what was more was that it wasn't just the power and dexterity.

This body had its own quality.

Easily said, a 'genius' quality.

Abilities that people would not be able to obtain through logical training.

Only a few are born with this ability, and these people are called 'gifted'.

Reflexes beyond human logic.

Flexibility which allows the body to fly in critical situations.

Vision which allows these people to observe and learn quickly in certain situations.

Thorough understanding of the human body.

Critical thinking in highly pressured environments and executing tactics others wouldn't even be able to think of.

Adaptability allowing them to perfect a difficult movement in just one try etc.

There were people like this in the sports world.

It was just a small amount.

The growth of my body from the Tutorial seemed to have also improve these “talented” qualities as well.

I have to admit, it excited me.

It felt like I went over a line that said “The limit of biological physiology” in an instant.

On top of that, I was capable.

I had talent.

I’m not trying to simply make bullshit up for the moment, it was the truth.

I had a wide field of view, critical thinking and imagination. In addition, my reflexes allowed me to reach the top as a pro-gamer.

At the very least, my mind and eyes were the best quality of mine.

Let’s add exceptional fitness to that now.

My confidence grew.

But then again, this could just be a side effect of my personality due to the sudden improvement of my fitness and body physique, since before it was awfully weak.

Anyway, the strength I felt from this body was making me excited and upbeat.

I opened the status bar with excitement.

I'll check the changes in my body for the final time.

I should keep moving my body constantly and get used to this superhuman body.

As I was reading my status bar slowly and thoroughly, I saw something I had never seen before.

[Battle Concentration (Lv.7)]

Description: Improves concentration during battle greatly. Can maintain high levels of concentration for longer periods of time. Can consciously push concentration beyond the limits for a brief moment. Can maintain concentration beyond limits for longer periods of time if mental strength allows it.

Requirements – Battle concentration skill Lv.6 and above, mental strength beyond base standards, experience of high concentration without aid of the skill.

There was an active for battle concentration.

I'm allowed to use this consciously?

The 'experience of high concentration without the aid of the skill' must be like that weird time I was in the boss room.

I could keep that kind of concentration whenever I wanted to?

Damn, this was the best skill.

After checking my Battle Concentration skill, I checked how long I could maintain it and how much I could move around while using this skill.

Surprisingly, it didn't feel like I needed some sort of magical power.

'As mental strength allows it', just like the skill description says, it seems that the only thing that was being used was my own mental strength.

The one downside to it was the fact it used my mental strength. That was actually scary.

As I maintained this skill for 5 minutes, I felt a dizziness and a headache. As time passed more, my vision was shaky.

I forced myself to maintain it longer, only to feel the need to vomit and my legs gave way.

After all that, due to the mental fatigue I really couldn't do anything.

Actually, I just didn't want to do anything.

Although I learned the active ability of Battle Concentration's limits and risks, I kept using the skill whenever I could.

It wasn't simply to try and level up the skill or to improve my mental strength.

It was really helpful when doing workouts and also when I used my sword and shield, it made everything a lot more effective.

With this enhanced mental strength, the world seemed a lot slower and that allowed me to observe my body and its muscles. I could tell how they were moving and what kind of energy they were exerting through the movements.

With this constant repetition, the slightly awkward movements were becoming more comfortable.

As I began my training, I felt a little frustrated.

Oh how great it would have been if I had a personal trainer.

A person that knew how to wield a sword and shield well, a person that understood the body really well.

Or even a person that could give me advice after understanding how my feeble body had improved.

All this pent up frustration for nothing.

There was no one here to help me, I was all alone.

With nobody around to guide me, I just sucked it up and went through it all by myself.

As I devoted my whole time into training, the 1st attempt ended.

[2nd Attempt will now begin.]

[Hell difficulty, Noticeboard (1/6)]

Chapter 19 - Tutorial 2nd Floor, Waiting Room (Part 3)

[The 2nd attempt will commence.]

The 2nd attempt has begun.

As soon as the attempt started, the portal in the corner of the waiting room vanished.

Just like the beginning of the 1st attempt, it seemed like you had to stay the first 3 days within the waiting room.

With the combination of 3 days in the waiting room and 30 days to challenge the floor, it seemed like a total of 33 days were allowed per attempt.

To be able to prepare for another additional 3 days with no pressure was definitely good news.

There was still room for growth while in the waiting room.

As long as I devote myself to training instead of dozing off for the next three days, there should be significant improvements before entering the 2nd floor.

I had to prioritize my understanding and use of this body. This could probably be done through gym based exercises which would also improve my stats.

I was still in my baby steps for shield and sword wielding, not to mention I also had to get more familiar of using the Battle Concentration skill.

Improving my tolerance skills wasn't a bad idea with the healing effects of the waiting room present.

However, my priority should still be to improve my general fitness and use of skills.

Hmm. Come to think of it, to try and improve my tolerance skills in the waiting room seemed like an amazing idea.

Could I improve my haemorrhage tolerance?

I mean, it will be healed before I bleed so maybe not.

But there shouldn't be a problem trying to improve my tolerance for pain and piercing resistance.

With that, I decided to inflict self-harm in my break periods between training.

But I mean, I don't know if it should be called a 'break' when I'm

constantly gouging into my own flesh by myself.

[Time until Tutorial begins, 71 hours 50 minutes]

[Hell difficulty, Noticeboard (1/6)]

Huh?

I opened the Community tab to see if there was any new information but I saw something unexpected.

What?... A total of 6 people?

Unable to brush off the sudden shock, I stared at the number.

As I looked at the other Community chats of other difficulties, I could tell what had happened.

As the 2nd attempt had begun, new people had appeared in the 1st floor.

[Kim Kyung Jin, 2nd Floor : Yo, seems like there are new people on the 1st floor?]

[Lee Jin Seok, 1st Floor : Yeah, seems like more people were

kidnapped when the 2nd attempt began. I'm here with the new people.]

[Kim Kyung Jin, 2nd Floor : Hey uh, did you not pass the 1st floor?]

[Lee Jin Seok, 1st Floor : Yeah fucker.]

[Kim Kyung Jin, 2nd Floor : Why are you swearing?]

[Nam Seon Woo, 1st Floor : What is this... Ah, I'm going fucking crazy.]

[Lee Hee Jin, 1st Floor : This doesn't feel like a dream, where am I? Why can I see weird things and who are these weird people...]

A flood of confused messages filled the Community tab quickly where the messages left by the 1st attempt players once were.

It was the completely same situation as the beginning of the 1st attempt.

Where is this? Who brought me here? What are these crazy messages?

These were questions that obviously had to be asked in a situation like this.

Likewise, questions like these couldn't be answered.

When the 1st attempt had begun, no one in Hell difficulty wrote questions like that to try and find answers.

We knew there would be no sufficient answers.

With the leadership of Choi Min Sik, the 4 of us shared opinions and prepared for what would happen next.

It seemed like it was the same for the people in the 2nd attempt.

None of the five that entered Hell difficulty wrote anything in the Community chat.

However, there was never knowing what was truly going in the waiting room of the 1st floor.

I couldn't help but feel a little worried.

Even if they were having structured and constructive discussions about their future, they didn't know the real danger of Hell difficulty.

I could easily predict their future.

A wipe out. Every single one of them would die.

As the sole survivor who cleared the 1st Floor of Hell difficulty, I was most certain of this.

[Hell difficulty, noticeboard (4/6)]

3 people from the 1st Floor entered the Community chat!

Without wasting time, I quickly wrote in the Community chat.

[Lee Ho Jae, 2nd Floor : New people of Hell difficulty, please write in the Community chat. Let's talk]

There was no information regarding Hell difficulty throughout the entirety of the Community chat.

The only person that knew about it was me, and I didn't write shit.

As a result, the 1st Floor players could only get information about the floors from Hard difficulty or lower.

Surviving Hell difficulty with only that type of information wasn't reassuring.

Actually, with information like that, they could be at more of a

risk due to the misleading information.

And then they would just die.

[Lee Ho Jae, 2nd Floor : I got here in the 1st attempt. I am in Hell difficulty too. I will give you important information so please, answer me.]

But there was no response.

I found about direct 1:1 messaging while scanning the Community chat the other day. I was trying to give information to the people on the 1st Floor but how am I supposed to when they won't even reply?

There wasn't a listing of people or anything of the sort in the Community chat, so I couldn't directly message anyone who hadn't written a comment before.

I started chewing on my nails in anxiety for them.

Just why?

There was no reason to ignore me like this.

They were definitely in the Community chat.

It had definitely been a few minutes since they had entered this chat.

I couldn't find a reason.

If I could find a reason I would be able to persuade them but, I just couldn't.

[Hell difficulty, Noticeboard (1/6)]

Ah, fuck.

They left Community chat.

I had graded the intelligence of Kirikiri quite low when I saw its peak the other day.

But compared to the retards from the 1st Floor, Kirikiri was quite a smart bunny.

With frustration and rage, I disregarded what pity I had left for them and lifted my head up.

I literally tried spoon feeding them, all they had to do was chew and swallow.

But they didn't even open their fucking mouths.

I did what I could.

What else could I do here?

On top of that, I was in a situation where I didn't even have enough time to invest for myself anyway.

There was no purpose for me to waste my efforts into this.

Damn.

But it wasn't right to just leave these people to die.

I thought for a long time.

Ah, fucking hell.

I pondered for a moment and came up with only one answer.

I wrote about everything I knew about the traps in Hell difficulty in the Community chat.

I regretted this decision.

‘puff puff’

I was short of breath.

However, I couldn’t afford to stand and rest, there was no time.

From here, the only way to move forward was to tackle any obstacles head on.

I quickly bent my knees.

After, a quick forward roll.

As I stood up I tilted my body to the way I was facing and flew my body to the left.

This movement may be too stressful to your knees and my back, but I was able to perform this with no trouble.

I kept rolling to the side and as I stopped, I swung my shield to the left.

In situations like these where I come to a complete stop, I had to be careful of arrows flying behind me.

After quickly scanning my surroundings, I began to run again.

After dodging the last arrow that was heads towards your ankle, just keep a steady pace and you clear the trap.

‘Huaaa.’

I took deep long breaths to calm myself down.

Since a few days ago, I’ve been doing simulations of the trap right before the boss room of the 1st floor.

Although there was no pattern to it, the speed of the arrows fired and the sound of the arrows being fired were the same throughout.

There may have been quite a few differences with the actual trap since this was just a simulation, but it still helped me a lot in terms of training.

Even after a few attempts of my personal simulation, I didn’t get any severe injuries.

I was getting quite used to this body. With the blessing of the Wind Spirit, the additional dexterity stats it provided and the battle concentration active skill allowed me to improve greatly.

This self-assurance didn't come from just the simulations you know?

I knew that if I went back to the 1st floor, there would be a big

difference. I would be able to clear it without any major injuries.

If I just concentrated on dodging the arrows with composure, clearing it would be a breeze.

Of course, I wasn't too sure about this with the boss room though.

The thing about the boss room was that it wasn't just about the wounds, if luck wasn't on your side either, or even if you had a slight hindrance in your concentration you could just die in the lava.

I told myself to never let my guard down until I had the confidence to clear the 1st floor boss room... no, each and every boss room without any injuries. My training had to continue.

After one more attempt, I sat in place as a little break.

Of course I wasn't just resting. I was constantly stabbing myself in the arm with a knife while reading the Community chat.

Unfortunately, none of my resistance skills had levelled up.

Maybe the waiting room didn't allow for the levelling of these type of skills? Or Maybe I just didn't do it enough, so I kept stabbing myself.

I should ask Kirikiri about this.

I mean, the 2nd attempt will begin soon.

There wasn't any new information in the Community chat that was eye-opening.

No replies from the 1st Floor either.

There were a lot of reactions from people of different difficulties about my experiences of Hell difficulty.

Most of the reactions were along the lines of 'What? For real? It was like that?' or like 'Lies. What a fucking liar'.

There was a chance that all the traps in the 2nd floor was different to the information I put up in the Community chat.

No matter what, they could at least tell how gruesome this difficulty was with the info I provided.

Please, believe in the information that I wrote.

I prayed for the safety and wellbeing of the new players on the 1st Floor of Hell.

This was all I could do for them.

I did what I thought was best.

I had no thought of doing more, and I couldn't do more either.

[The Tutorial 2nd attempt will begin soon.]

[A portal will appear to enter the Tutorial stage.]

[Portal activated.]

[Enter the stage?]

It was time to focus on myself now, not anyone else.

Chapter 20 - Tutorial 2nd Floor (Part 1)

[Now, now. Calm down. This will all come back to help you later...]

[Madness, really... This is madness...]

[Welcome to Tutorial Floor 2, Hell Difficulty.]

The 2nd floor was quite similar as the 1st floor in terms of looks.

A straight, dark corridor made of stone.

Only difference would be, that the ceiling is slightly lower than the 1st floor.

Unlike the similarity between the 1st and 2nd floor, I have become quite different.

It's not just the change in stats and skills, but my looks aswell.

I no longer wear the t-shirt I wore at home, but a leather armour which I bought using the points from the 1st floor.

It was a light armour, so that it won't weigh me down.

Ofcourse, I can't rely much on this armour in terms of defense.

My reaction to the traps are still evasion and parrying with sword and shield.

I believe it would be unwise to rely on the ability of my equipments so soon.

Thanks to the points from the additional reward, I could have been able to buy a full plated heavy armour if I wanted to.

But, relying on the armour's defense would hamper the growth of my skills.

Therefore, I purposely chose the thin, light armour.

It was reinforced with a steel plate on the chest, to prevent any accidents which may injure my heart.

Other equipments would be the thick leather bands around my wrists and ankles.

After the increase in my stats, I was unable to adjust to the changes, resulting in injuring my wrists and feet from running or swinging the sword too fast.

It was to protect my muscles from these situations.

Lastly, I checked the numbers and variety of potions which were bought with Kirikiri's advices.

Now, let's start.

I walked at a moderate pace.

Forcing fast progress was dangerous.

An unexpected attack from an unexpected source was what made Hell difficulty truly a nightmare in the Tutorial.

But it wasn't necessary to progress slowly either.

It wasn't the same as when I made it through the 1st floor with tensions high, guards up all the time.

I was different now from back then.

I could take tension better now.

My physical capabilities and my reflexes have increased dramatically aswell.

This wasn't just for boast, or saying I could let my guard down.

I've assessed my strengths and weaknesses and subsequently am confident on making statements like these.

That wasn't all.

There was support from the Sprint skill and the Wind Spirit's blessing.

I found out that there were two buffs from the Wind Spirit's blessings.

First, +10 to Dexterity.

And the wind spirit's blessing itself.

I was able to find out what these effects were during the time I waited for the 2nd attempt in the waiting room.

To explain simply, it was similar to the Sprint skill.

When my movement speed exceeds a certain threshold, my body becomes faster and lighter.

It was difficult to notice because of the similarity with my sprint skill and the increase in dexterity.

But, as I kept on with my training, I have felt something different.

It wasn't just the strength and speed of the run, but the weight of the body lightened aswell.

It was as if a mysterious magic was aiding my movement.

Allowing movements that would normally seem impossible, like the movements seen from an elf in a fantasy book or movie.

That was the effect that the Wind Spirit's blessing had.

And it's performance was quite astonishing.

I may not have the exact details of it's effect unlike in a game, but as long as this skill was in effect, my ability to dodge would increase substantially.

The freedom of movement it allowed was out of this world, even if it didn't increase the speed by much.

Therefore, for the last few days I have tried to find the minimum speed at which this skill activates.

I wasn't sure of the exact speed, but it's alittle faster than a brisk walk.

As long as I maintained this speed when travelling, most traps wouldn't pose a problem.

Especially if it's the normal arrow traps like the ones on the 1st floor.

I don't even need Battle Concentration for that.

Ping-

As if reading my mind, I could hear an arrow being released.

It was coming from the ceiling straight ahead.

Tung!

I blocked it with my shield cleanly.

And

Shook-Shook-

I rolled forward as I lower my back to dodge the two arrows from ahead.

The two arrows that came after the first did not make any noises.

I continued to dodge the arrows as I watch them fly by with my eyes.

Arrows of this speed could never hit me, as long as I watch out for the ones from my blind spots.

Tang.

I decided to parry one of the oncoming arrows with my sword, as dodging them was child's play at this point.

It would be dangerous if I were to fail, but whenever there was a chance, I tried to improve my swordsmanship skill.

Pang-

A loud sound came with the arrows that were just fired.

And it happened to be coming at the very same path of the arrow I just parried.

Annoying.

The centre of my balance was currently shifted because of the sword strike I just made.



[Battle Concentration]

The arrows seemed to travel slowly, as my consciousness accelerated greatly from my skill.

First I dodged the arrow that was coming toward my ankle and let through the arrow which was flying past my cheek.

Then I looked ahead again.

Weird.

That arrow was too big.

And it's too fast aswell.

Among all the arrows in this slow world, that arrow flew towards me with considerable speed.

Damn it. I couldn't dodge this.

It's difficult to let it slide past my shield too.

This wasn't the time to have an adventure.

If I failed to parry that arrow, my life would be in danger.

In the slow world created by Battle Concentration, the arrows weren't the only thing that's slowed.

Even my body cannot keep up with my consciousness, and move at a snail's pace.

The only thing which it enhanced were my consciousness and awareness.

Thankfully, I was able to raise my shield and recover into a proper stance to receive it.

But still.

That arrow was too weird.

I adjusted the placement of my shield.

And.

BANG!

Even though I managed to block the arrow, the shock from the impact was significant.

I rolled backward in order to absorb the impact as much as possible.

But, the arrow managed to pierce my left arm, not to mention the shield, completely.

Uaaaaaaah! Damn it.

It seemed like the arrow shattered through my bone aswell.

If the arrow wasn't blocked by my arm, it would definitely have gone through the shield and into my chest.

It was a good decision to place my arm in it's path.

If I didn't have much knowledge on how to block aswell, it's possible that the arrow would have gone through my arm aswell and hit me in the chest.

I mean, how was this considered an arrow?

It's more like a ballista's bolt.

Ping ping-

Shit, that wasn't the end.

I could hear the noises from behind me.

It seems the Battle Concentration skill was canceled when I got hit by that arrow.

I tried to dodge by rolling in the air, but managed to get hit in the ankle.

It stung pretty badly.

Thankfully, there weren't any more which was coming toward me.

First, I checked my ankle.

It seemed like what was on it wasn't an arrow, but a needle.

Poison sting?

I quickly reminded myself of Kirikiri's advices.

There must be something on the needle which causes some sort of status effect.

That must be for certain.

First, I carefully pulled the needle out of my ankle.

Then I checked my body for any reaction.

Since it's a needle, I would assume that it was dipped in poison...

But I can't be certain.

I can't drink the potion with just an assumption aswell.

I simply sit next to the wall, with my inventory open.

Damn it.

The arrow in my left arm was bothering me.

The left arm's in a critical state aswell.

The tip of the arrow shattered right through the muscle and bone of my arm.

I wasn't even sure if I would even be able to tell the what the symptoms with this pain coming from my arm.

I was getting worried.

I tried to focus on the ankle, trying my best to ignore the pain

from the arm.

Whoo.

I could feel myself sweating now.

I'm not sure if it's because of the intense exercise I had, or the arrow in my arm, or because of the sting I had on the ankle.

After a while, I could feel pulsating pain on my ankle.

The pain radiated slowly, then began to feel hot as if it was burned.

I think it was poison.

It's not going to instantly kill me right?

As I waited a little longer, I could feel my ankle becoming paralysed.

Let's wait, just a little more.

The paralysis began to come up my leg, the head started to feel hot, and headache was starting.

Afterward it was a stomachache.

It was poison for sure.

I took out an antidote from my inventory.

There should be many types of poison out there...

I was curious as to whether there was only 1 type of poison in the Tutorial or whether the antidote potion removed all different types of poison.

Let's ask Kirikiri about that one day.

Trying to open the potion with one arm was quite the struggle.

I barely managed to take the cork out, and put the potion next to my mouth.

There was a rotten smell inside the potion.

Was this really a potion?

This better not actually be poison that was slyly written as an antidote.

Wow.

This being the first time I was poisoned, I was getting quite startled.

I could feel pain from throughout my body, not to mention the heat and paralysis as well.

All these symptoms...

Um...

Wait a minute...

It's not so bad actually.

Shall we wait alittle more?

Chapter 21 - Tutorial 2nd Floor (Part 2)

The poison crept up my bloodstream.

As time passed by, more symptoms arose with greater intensity.

But, I was still able to withstand it.

It may probably sound like my usual boasting, but I have a special ability.

A special ability I received after being on the verge of death time after time in the last month.

It's like sensing death.

I could tell, at any current situation, how close I was to dying.

Really.

Hm, this time I crossed the Styx river, greeted my ancestors and came back.

Oh, I only came back half way this time.

Seems like I just washed my face on the river. Good.

I was just doing warm ups for the swim in front of the river now.

After describing each danger I came across like this, I managed gain the ability.

Although to say, it's lacking in credibility.

Anyway, from what I feel, I am quite far from river Styx.

Like the final stop before the Styx River toll gate?

All these symptoms I've never felt before, paralysis, headache, stomach ache and edema were apparent, but the pain wasn't significant enough to be lethal.

What would probably be serious for me to cause a swift death would be from getting into a state of shock.

And with this body equipped with the highest pain resistance skill available, mediocre pain like this wouldn't even come close to causing shock.

It's still somewhat bearable.

Let's stay like this alittle more to get some poison resistance skill, then drink the potion.

I closed the potion's cork, after planning my actions from here.

Hm... actually, it was such a waste to drink the potion now.

This trap happened to be the first trap of the 2nd floor.

I was still fairly close to the waiting room.

If I could, I would just go back to the waiting room, without using the potion.

I briefly thought about how probable it was.

[You have received Poison Resistance Lv.1]

Nice timing.

I pulled out a strap from my inventory.

I brought it in case if the bleeding got out of hand, to survive a little longer by tightening the blood vessels.

I strapped it on the calf above the ankle, to prevent any more poison from spreading.

But, it has probably spread everywhere by now.

Slowly after, I stood up.

I remember the instructions I was told in the case of getting bitten by a poisonous snake in the mountains.

Maybe it's from the end of the year Workshop I went to in my pro team back in the day.

I moved my body slowly to not raise my heartbeat, just as I was instructed.

I picked up the poisonous darts on the floor.

Including the one that was on my ankle, there were 5 in total.

I began my slow walk toward the waiting room.

During the walk, I found the situation I was in quite funny.

Here I am, with a giant arrow piercing through my arm and all sorts of symptoms coming out from being poisoned, but I look like I'm just having a walk in the park with the way I'm walking.

Maybe in the near future, I would really become something like a troll.

Or perhaps, an amoeba that was able to simply duplicate when cut in half.

As I snickered at myself, I felt something abnormal in my body.

The paralysis suddenly became worse.

Waht was bearable before now became much more intense. The paralyis which was simply spreading across the body before, changed.

With the intensity greater, moving my body became much more difficult.

It wasn't to the point of being unable to move, but very difficult.

There were times I just kicked the air without walking, and I almost fell over once as I stumbled my way back.

My breathing became quicker.

Ah, the poisons gonna spread quicker this way.

I'm slowly seeing the parking lot for the Styx River.

Cold sweat appeared all over my body.

I'm gonna be dehydrated on top of everything now.

At some point, I managed to reach the portal to the waiting room.

Rather than entering straight away, I sat right in front of it.

I took the strap on my leg off.

Then regretted immediately.

The rate at which the poison spread and it's intensity increased dramatically.

My hands and feet began to shake.

I was having trouble breathing.

The paralysis became much stronger.

[You have received Paralysis resistance Lv. 1]

My vision became much more narrow aswell.

My thought process began to slow down.

It's the opposite of the effect when I use battle focus.

I can only hear my heartbeat in my ears.

Babump. Babump.

I was listening to the sound of my heart without a thought, as if it was a lullaby.

I raised my right arm, and twisted the arrow on my left.

The pain woke me up slightly.

At this moment, I thought I may die with the portal just in front of me.

Did the paralysis reach my brain aswell?

Wouldn't it be so sad to die without entering the waiting room, just because my brain slowed down.

With the portal just a hair's breath away?

This was the end for the dangerous game.

[Will you enter 2nd Floor waiting room?]

Yes.

I felt the portal's lights wrap around me, then lost consciousness.

When I opened my eyes again, what I saw was the waiting room's ceiling.

Phew.

I was scared for a second.

When the poison spread to a certain point, the body's state deteriorated at an extreme pace.

It seems I need to be careful when raising the poison resistance by withstanding the poison in my body.

But at the same time, it's not like its to a point where I don't want to do it again.

I've done it once now, and with the resistance skill aswell, I

should be able to stand it much better.

[Poison resistance Lv.1]

[Paralysis resistance Lv.1]

Seeing that poison resistance was received, I can say for certain that it's poison on those darts.

The paralysis resistance is because of the paralysis symptom from the poison.

Once I reached the portal, the paralysing effect of the poison became stronger.

Not just the paralysis of the body, but breathing stopped, and consciousness dropped.

In my honest opinion, rather than the poison, it's the poison's paralysing effect I'm more worried about.

Ah, what happened to the poison darts?

I found the 5 needles next to the giant arrow on the ground.

Regrettably, perhaps because of the waiting room's effect, the poison was completely purified.

I saved the needles in the inventory, just in case I needed it later.

I stood up and reached the portal again.

There's no point in waiting, so let's venture more.

In the 1st round, I left without conquering the floor completely because I was short on time.

I won't let that happen again by wasting the time away.

Telling that to myself, I advanced into the 2nd floor once more.

[Welcome to Tutorial Floor 2, Hell difficulty]

My first aim was to attain Poison or Paralysis resistance to Lv.3, if not both, by the end of today.

The required experience to level up increase exponentially with each level, so I need to hurry.

If I reach my aim, or the day has gone past, I will stop the poison resistance training, and reach beyond the 1st trap.

It's important to raise the resistance skill from the 1st trap for safety, but it's also important to progress through the tutorial in the given time.

Pang-

I twist my body to dodge that ballista of an arrow.

I didn't make any wasted movements beforehand like parrying with a sword, not to mention I knew when it would come aswell, so I was ready to dodge it before it was even coming. I didn't even need Battle Concentration for this.

This is why information was important.

Ping-Ping-

Lastly, the poison darts coming from behind.

It was easy to block with the shield, since I turned around as soon as I dodged the last arrow.

But this was not the end.

I took out the needles on the shield, and took it to the portal.

"Of all things I've done until now, I'm doing something like this now."

I mutter to myself as I lean on the wall next to the portal.

I don't usually talk to myself when nobody was around, but with the situation I'm in, it just came out on it's own.

It wasn't something new to me.

I've already been cutting myself in the past in order to raise my resistance during spare time.

But it was quite different to poison myself by stabbing poisonous darts into myself.

It felt like I was taking the right steps into evolving into a troll.

I picked one of the darts and stabbed it deep into my right hand.

It was pierced much closer to the heart, compared to the time at my ankle.

The spread of the poison may be different because of that, so I

needed to be careful.

And I needed to know and differentiate between each limb when they are poisoned.

I began to feel the effects after a while.

Pain on the area and paralysis.

Cold sweat appeared, while having a sick stomach.

My head began to spin with dizziness, and consciousness dropped.

The paralysis spread, and soon it began to intensify.

It's definitely the same as before.

Everything was going smooth.

Let's try my best and finish it by today.

Chapter 22 - Tutorial 2nd Floor (Part 3)

[2nd attempt, Day 2. 2:22]

[You have gained Poison Resistance Lv.2]

[You have gained Paralysis Resistance Lv.3]

In conclusion, I failed to achieve my goal of reaching level 3 in both poison and paralysis resistances.

I was able to get level 2 in poison resistance relatively quickly, however it was only up to that.

I felt a little uneasy because the skill didn't level up to level 3 as easily as it did reaching level 2, so I pushed myself a little too much and lost consciousness, wasting more time.

At least paralysis resistance levelled up quite fast, unexpectedly. That gave me a little comfort in this situation.

I was investigating if the poison on the poison dart was a type of neurotoxin or a paralyzing poison.

If it wasn't, how else would the paralysis resistance level up

faster than poison resistance after stabbing myself with a poison dart?

It would've been useful to have some knowledge about poisons.

Anyway, my poison resistance didn't end up reaching level 3 within time.

Now I had to go ahead beyond the 1st trap.

It would be better to progress through to the end as fast as I could and calmly increase my resistance skills then, rather than being chased by the time limit near the end of the attempt.

The traps past the 1st one will surely be traps related to poisons, so my plan was to increase my resistance in a day's time.

Well, at least I got the minimum level, that itself was ok.

The first trap didn't pose much of a challenge; I was used to it now.

As I walked further for maybe another 5 minutes, the 2nd trap appeared.

Ping-

The awaited sound of the arrow being fired.

I easily blocked the incoming arrow with my shield.

The arrow was shining quite a bit though.

Was there poison on the arrows now?

If that was the case, that means that more arrows will now fly towards me.

Ping-Ping-

[Battle Concentration]

As soon as I thought that the trap would become tedious, I activated my Battle Concentration skill and observed my surroundings.

Soon I knew that activating this skill early was the right choice.

There were 6 arrows in total flying towards me from the left, right and straight ahead.

Was there some flying towards me from the back?

While I thought about it, I heard exactly 2 sounds of arrows being fired.

I could hear the softest sounds as my senses were greatly improved over time.

However, this time I could only hear 2 sounds.

The rest were near perfect silence.

I couldn't hear any firing sounds.

This was a trap that exploited my confidence in my hearing. It made me rely on my hearing too much as it allowed me to stay a little relaxed.

If I were to say this in a g-rated way, this was a cheeky wee trap.

If I were to say this in my honest opinion, this was a fucking dogshit trap.

There was nothing more to think about in this type of situation.

I had to quickly make a decision and swung my body to the left.

The arrows flying towards me from the left were blocked by my

shield with two blunt sounds.

The other arrows from every direction continued flying where I was before.

So there were arrows coming from behind me...

Without any breathing space, I had to dodge all the arrows that were constantly being fired.

As I had Battle Concentration activated, this wasn't too difficult.

The problem was, in addition to the arrows being fired, there were also poison darts.

On top of that, they were flying in the same trajectory as the arrows so it was hard to detect the ones flying right behind the arrows.

If it weren't for the persistent effect of the activated Battle Concentration, if it weren't for the Eye Lights ability to let me see in this dark place, I may have been hit by another poison dart in this place.

Tick-tick-

While dodging the arrows, I dodged the poison darts flying behind them with ease.

A few of the poison darts were blocked by my shield and scattered all over the floor now.

Like this, with the same pattern, more arrows and poison darts were fired together.

That was the end of the 2nd trap.

It used my sense of hearing against me with its cheeky tricks, firing poison darts hidden behind the arrows. Maybe it was because two new patterns were introduced in this trap, it was quite short.

No, it could also be that there was something special about the poison slathered on the poison darts and arrowheads.

For example, the poison may have been stronger.

For all I know, it might not even be poison.

Hmm, should I test this?

I have thought about this before, but I think I have some sort of obsession now.

Whenever I find something new, I want to test every single one of them on my body and see how many times I have to repeat it to

earn a new skill.

Hmm...

Let's not, for now.

There was a high chance that this could be just like the 1st trap and it could just be poison.

The grinding of my resistance skills could wait until I find the 2nd floor healing well.

Of course, I needed to have some resistance skills so I don't die before I find the healing too.

After stashing all arrows and poison darts into my inventory I carried on forward.

The next few traps to come were all also just traps combining arrows and poison darts.

There were various patterns and the speed of the arrows increased as I went on, getting more dangerous. However maybe it was because of how much I grinded in the past, I was able to clear it without big issues.

The problem was not the arrow traps.

I don't know since when, but slowly the air was getting warmer.

If it weren't for my Heightened Senses skill, it would be the slightest increase in temperature that no normal person would be able to detect, but I was sure that inside of this tutorial the temperature was rising.

At first it was such just a slight change that it was quite hard to finalise if it was rising, however, as time went and the air got significantly warmer, I finally came to my senses.

Suddenly I was at a stage where my body was hot and there were specks of sweat on my forehead.

On top of the increasing heat, as we add the heavy, humid air in the equation, just staying in this environment made me tired.

With these conditions, the traps kept appearing.

Ping-ping-

Ahh, fucking hell.

I kept moving to dodge the arrows in this disgusting heat while having Battle Concentration active.

Wow, this was really, really shit.

I was able to clear yet ANOTHER arrow trap.

Of course poison was slathered on these arrows.

However, it wasn't the poison that was the important part here...

It's so hot...

The situation was critical.

Even a sauna wouldn't be as hot as this.

It was so hot I couldn't even breathe properly.

I drank cold water from my inventory and sprayed the leftover water in the bottle over my head.

The cold water turned into an uncomfortably warm temperature as it flowed down my face.

Fuck, now I understood why the 2nd floor arrow traps felt a little easy.

It was aimed to just train the challenger in intense heat.

No wonder I had to plan my way of dodging in such extended movements.

On top of that, they ever so slowly raised the temperature to hide the intensity of the heat.

There is a saying that if you put a frog in boiling water it will jump out in reflex, but if you put a frog in cold water and slowly boil it, the frog won't be able to detect the change and just die.

Quite a metaphor to describe myself as a frog in boiling water.

However, unlike a metaphor, I was actually about to die like that frog in boiling water.

...This is really dangerous.

First I thought this was just a device to blur my mental strength.

I thought that I would easily be able to clear this if I withstood the temperature and held onto my senses.

One miscalculation here was that this wasn't just a trap about perseverance.

My body simply could not withstand this heat.

From some time ago, my leg muscles were in a slight tremor.

The effects of dehydration, like dizziness and the feeling of throwing up, had struck me from a long time ago also.

It was too dangerous to go on like this.

Another arrow trap will surely appear and with my body like this, I was unsure if I could dodge all of them.

On top of that, I'd be a goner if I were to be poisoned by the arrow I got hit by.

I could even get in shock from the pain only.

[You have gained Heat Resistance Lv.1]

Luckily, I earned a resistance skill.

At a time like this, where I could barely breathe because of the hot air, for an instant it felt like a gust of crisp, cold air was blown all over me.

It felt just like the air you feel when you leave the sauna.

But this was, like I said, just for an instant.

Soon after I could barely breathe again.

A fucking hell, really.

Chapter 23 - Tutorial 2nd Floor (Part 4)

‘Now, what do I do?’

I needed to make a decision.

A very fast one.

Not a second to waste.

Even now the extreme heat was making my body into leather.

‘Can I survive if I turn back?’

The traps I had already passed should not activate again on the way back.

But, this heat would remain.

Could I survive the way back to the Waiting Room while this heat remained?

It was doubtful.

My body was deteriorating quickly.

‘Perhaps I'm having a heatstroke.’

‘I never thought that heat would be so harmful to the body.’

‘I thought it would be just more of a nuisance. Damn it!’

I marched forward.

The probability that I would escape this heat before my body collapsed wasn't high.

In fact, it was very low.

I'd come too far to turn back now.

And the body was in critical state.

‘Now that the decision has been made, let's move.’

Sweat was pouring all over the body, and severe dehydration came with it.

Not to mention the muscles began to alternate between convulsion and rigidity as well.

I may not had much medical knowledge, but even from my perspective, this was a very, very serious situation.

"Inventory."

Losing count on how many water bottles I had opened, I drank furiously, and poured the remainder on my body.

Next, I took out a potion.

[Freezing potion]

Description: Potion which chills an area for an extended period of time. Is harmful when touched onto skin. Oral administration is not recommended.

This potion was Kirikiri's recommendation.

‘I have to say thanks when I return.’

The liquid within the bottle had a sticky, jelly like texture.

It didn't even pour out well from the bottle, being so tightly packed.

I took out a large cloth from the inventory.

It was originally intended to be used as a blanket when I bought it.

Cutting an edge of the cloth, I quickly made a suitable shape with it, and poured the potion on one side of the cloth.

It quickly soaked into the cloth.

Some of the heat dissipated after wrapping the cloth around me like a hairdresser gown.

Next I took out a towel, wet it with water and poured the remaining freezing potion on top.

Putting the towel on my head, I could finally breathe again.

‘Now, let's continue onward.’

In order to replace all the salt I've lost with sweat, I put some of the salty jerkies into my dry mouth, and walked while chewing on it.

I maintained the minimum speed at which the Wind Spirit's blessing triggers.

To go as far as I could, while I still had some stamina.

But I quickly reached my limit.

The cloth and the towel were doing their job, but the body was too exhausted in the first place.

Muscles trembled repeatedly, and the mind couldn't keep its focus anymore.

‘On the bright side, the extreme heat and humidity which tortured me has disappeared.’

Instead, the air was dry like that of a desert's.

‘Wait, that's not a good thing.’

The high temperature and high humidity before had placed both physical and mental exhaustion on me.

But with the sudden change into an arid environment, I could feel my body turning extremely dry.

I took out a stamina potion and drank it like water.

This was really expensive too...

It cost 400 points to buy just 1 bottle.

It was a ridiculous price, considering most status effect potions cost below 100 points.

In fact, this leather armour I was wearing was worth 350 points.

I wasn't keen on buying it due to its price, but Kirikiri made her recommendations.

‘Better say thanks for this too.’

‘If I can meet her.’

"Cough, cough."

The lungs didn't seem right.

I could feel a ripping pain on my chest, continuous coughs, and the breathing became heavy and rough at times.

I tried to regain normal breathing, but it wasn't happening.

It was turning difficult to even keep moving, let alone maintaining the speed.

The hands were shaky and cold, with skin color turning white.

‘How can the body turn cold in this heat?’

‘Is that even possible?’

‘Damn, this is not just another visit to my ancestors beyond the Styx.’

‘I'm moving over there for a place of my own.’

My sight began to spin about.

I couldn't even tell whether I was walking straight anymore.

Just the fact that I could still stand in this situation was amazing.

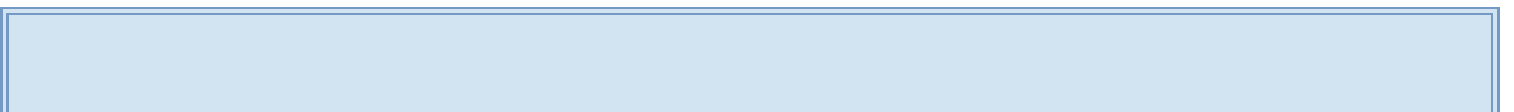
A normal person would have collapsed a long time ago.

The sweat which was pouring like a waterfall had stopped.

I thought it was the effect of the freezing potion, but I was mistaken.

It was abnormal for me to not sweat at all.

Unlike before, my skin felt like it was burning.



[You have received Burn Resistance Lv.2]

‘Burn Resistance?’

‘I’m getting burns now?’

It was certainly as hot as hell here, but not to the point of burning.

The environment had the climate of a desert, but unlike a desert, this tutorial didn't have a sun.

Yet I still got burned.

Maybe just like how meat was cooked slowly in low heat, my body was getting slowly cooked underneath.

I quickly took out another freezing potion.

I applied it on my hands, feet and any part of the body not covered by armor.

Just as the description said, as soon as the potion touched my skin, I could feel the chill and pain.

Perhaps because of the pain, I could see a little more clearly.

‘Seems like I’ll be getting Frostbite resistance too.’

‘But now’s not the time to worry about the pain or side effects on my skin.’

The outside of my skin was turning cold extremely fast, but the core temperature remained.

I could feel the heat coming out from within as if I had eaten fire.

My consciousness began to fade.

I forced myself to swallow the freezing potion.

I could feel the stomach freeze.

I could feel the extreme cold burning and causing ripping pain in my organs.

With pain added on top of my fading consciousness, my vision began to spin uncontrollably.

I had to move forward.

There wasn’t much time.

I ran, shaky and exhausted.

With all that remained of my strength.

The legs were heavy like steel, while my lungs screamed in pain.

But, I couldn't stop now.

There must be an end to this heat.

Now, forward.

Ping-

'Fuck, sakes!'

'You bastards! Fucking scum of the world!'

I threw myself onto the floor after hearing the arrow, without even checking on it.

Stab-stab-

I no longer had the strength to stand in this situation, and could only get hit by the following arrows.

Stab-stab

There was only one thing I could do against these arrows and poison darts on my way.

To curl my body and raise the shield on top of my back.

Many arrows were blocked by the shield, but some landed on my back and the sides as well.

Stab-stab-

‘Just, how many are coming this way?’

‘Let's think quickly.’

‘Shit, I feel like I'm about to die anytime soon.’

‘Let's open the inventory as soon as these arrows stop.’

‘Then take out the antidote, stamina and healing potions.’

‘Then run again.’

‘Forward.’

‘Then...’

‘Can I do it?’

‘Scratch running, can I even take out and drink a potion, in this situation.’

The situation was too grim

Maybe I was too excited.

Did I lose my awareness because of the newfound strength from the 1st floor.

These were very, very doable traps.

All I had to do was raise my Heat Resistance slowly, with a few trips back to the Waiting room.

But, I was too careless.

To not even realise the rising temperature until it was too late.

The arrows stopped at some point.

But, unlike my plan, the body could not move.

‘Am I dying here?’

From bad decisions, coupled with carelessness.

I guessed it was the price you paid in Hell difficulty.

‘But... But, am I really...’

[Level up]

[Strength increased by 2. Dexterity increased by 1. Heightened Senses skill increased by 1. Pain Resistance improved by 1. Heat Resistance improved by 1. Paralysis Resistance improved by 1]

‘Level up...’

‘It's a level up!’

The body moved again.

I stood as fast as I could.

The level up didn't simply heal my wounds but restored my body back to its peak performance, just like the Waiting room and

Healing fountain.

The arrows on my back fell on the ground, while the pain from the poison, heat and the freezing potion dissipated.

The extreme heat was still there, but at this moment, my body was renewed.

‘Now, let's move before my body falls to the heat again.’

‘Forward.’

There was no time to even think.

It wasn't just a fast walk, but a run instead.

I could feel the Charge skill and Wind spirit's blessing's effects fuse with my body.

I quickly became short of breath from moving so fast in a hot environment, but my body, which was on it's way to becoming superhuman, could withstand for now.

[Battle Concentration]

I even turned on the Battle Concentration while running.

It may not have much of an effect, but I wanted to put all my focus onto this run.

Just a little faster, more efficient.

‘Damn, it would've been nice if I was on the track team for school now.’

Ping!

The arrows again!

I tilted my head slightly to dodge the arrow coming at my face.

The arrows continued afterwards, but I didn't slow down and kept running.

Only forward.

Chapter 24 - Tutorial 2nd Floor (Part 5)

"Gasp, gasp."

I kept on sprinting, progressing forward.

I had continued to run ever since I miraculously survived the heat stroke thanks to the Level up's effects.

I could feel my lungs burning with every breath I took.

This horrible temperature was akin to hell's furnace.

‘I thought it was the correct decision when I started running.

‘But is going forward really the right decision?’

‘Maybe it would’ve been better to run back to the Waiting Room?’

‘Even now?’

‘No. It's too late to go back.’

Even at that very moment of my run, the Waiting Room was moving that much further away.

‘Let's just focus on running forward now.’

I thought that to myself, and picked up my speed.

Then I was dumbfounded.

‘What is this?’

My speed was getting faster.

Abnormally faster.

This was not the effect of my strength or my dexterity.

I had already checked the effects of my stats before.

‘Wind Spirit’s Blessing.’

‘It must be one of its effects.’

An effect I had never been able to find, since I could never find an opportunity to run at full speed in the confined space of the Waiting Room.

‘What an outrageous effect.’

‘This is not just added dexterity in effect here.’

With such an increase in speed, the air began to lash at my face.

‘Thankfully, I can finally feel some cool...’

‘No.’

‘The wind is so damn hot.’

‘It's as if someone is blowing a torch in front of my face.’

I could hear the violent turbulence of the wind.

The kind of sound you hear when you lower the windows while driving on a highway.

‘Is this something you should hear when a human runs?’

This was clearly not in the realm of human feat.

If my previous comparison was with Usain Bolt, the comparison now would be that of a cheetah or a scooter.

To top it off, even though I was sprinting at my full strength, I didn't feel tired at all.

My muscles and my lungs were at peak condition.

I felt like I could run the entire marathon at this speed.

‘This is dangerous.’

‘The skill is so effective that it's dangerous.’

‘It's too fast.’

‘And it's still getting faster.’

‘Should I slow down a little?’

‘Do I have the time to waste?’

‘No.’

‘Then, let's focus on running even faster.’

‘Let's figure out just how fast I can run with this.’

‘I must focus.’

Although I had turned Battle Concentration off due to reaching my mental limit, I decided to use it now.

[Battle Concentration]

Everything in my vision passed quickly by me.

Just looking at how fast I was going was giving me the chills.

It was similar to the finals for my last year of highschool.

I woke up too late and had to call a quick bike service to take me to school.

The chill I felt now was the chill I felt as the motorbike weaved through the cars on the streets at ridiculous speed.

It's terrifying enough to just run with my eyes open and keep my centre of balance.

I could feel my hands, feet and my stomach go cold even in this scorching heat reminiscent of a desert during a heat wave.

‘Damn, am I scared?’

I clenched my teeth, and focused on my muscles' movements.

‘Shit, shit!’

‘Big mistake.’

I was running fine when I didn't think about the individual movements of my muscles.

But the moment I was conscious of each and every movement of my body, I had to think how each arm and leg had to move in my head.

Just like how your breathing or blinking suddenly becomes unnatural the moment you become aware of it.

‘Uaaah.’

‘It feels as if my face is cooking from the hot wind.’

‘Actually, it is getting cooked!’

For the first time, I was grateful for the Pain Resistance.

This Pain Resistance skill did not remove the pain.

It just made you tolerate pain better.

‘I have always been unsatisfied with it, but at this moment, I have realised just how great of a skill it is.’

Even though I could feel my skin burning all over, I could ignore the pain while still being aware of it.

As a result, I could keep all of my senses intact while ignoring the pain, and run on.

Pain is not important.

What's important is the senses becoming dull or the body paralysed from either the cause of the pain or the pain itself.

And Pain Resistance helps to prevent it.

‘Anyway, it's about time for some arrows to come out.’

‘There is no way this sinister tutorial will leave me alone.’

Ping-ping-

It was as if someone was reading my mind.

Multiple arrows tipped with poison were fired at once.

Getting hit by an arrow while running at this speed would have been extremely dangerous.

But.

Whoosh-

The arrows could not keep up with the speed I was traveling at.

I managed to escape the traps before the arrows could even reach me.

I dodged one arrow coming straight at my face by just barely tilting my head to the side.

The remaining arrows from the front were from the ceiling being shot at a steep angle, so I could simply move through it without needing to dodge them.

The arrows from my sides and back couldn't even get anywhere near me.

To pass through a trap like this.

My head was filled with joy.

Even the burning pain from the hot wind could not stop this joy.

No matter how much it burned my skin...

‘Huh?’

‘The heat disappear...uh?’

‘Ah, shit!’

My legs got tangled.

The trip had much more severe consequences, since I was running at a speed closer to that of a scooter rather than a human being.

First, for a few seconds, I was in the air.

I believe I can fly-

I could see a light flash before my eyes as I felt the freedom of flying, just for a moment.

After the brief flight, I smashed, hit my head and rolled on the ground.

And lost my consciousness afterwards.

[Round 2, Day 3. 2:20]

‘Damn. How long was I out for?’

The floor was wet.

Of course, it was my blood that made it wet.

I was not even surprised at this point.

I took out a healing potion from the inventory.

It was my last remaining healing potion.

And I swore to save it as much as possible when I was buying it.

I drank all of this expensive liquid.

‘Hah-’

‘I feel empty.’

I just lied on my back and looked at the ceiling, with no

enthusiasm in sight.

‘How many times did I almost get killed now?’

‘If I were to pick them individually, it would be at least 20 times.’

‘I have managed to survive through those 20 near fatal events, but yesterday was especially dangerous.’

‘It's abnormal that I'm still alive right now.’

‘Thank god, the level up came when it did.’

I slowly began to remember what happened before I went out.

Embarrassment rushed into my head.

To almost die from tripping over my own two feet.

All the confidence I had before plummeted to the ground.

‘I must really be a retard.’

‘Uaah...’

The scorching heat had dissipated completely.

The metal plate on the armour which was hot as a coal had cooled down completely.

I sat up and began to check on my body.

The skin was burnt, with blisters, the size of my palm, sprinkled all over.

...It looked rather hideous.

Some of the hair was sticky and tangled with blood clot, while the remainder seemed to have burned away.

‘Did I catch fire as well?’

There were quite significant burns on my scalp.

To be so injured even after a Level up.

I thought I didn't get so damaged during the run, but I must have been mistaken.

Perhaps, I was too focused on the running part.

It seemed the healing potion had little effect on the burn marks and blisters.

I took out a burn healing potion from the inventory.

I looked at my status window as I slapped on some of the potion.

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv.7

Strength : 12

Dexterity : 32

Vitality : 18

Mana : 22

Skills : Battle Concentration Lv.7 Willpower Lv.3 Awakening Lv.1 Night Vision Lv.2 Brighter Sight Lv.1 Sprint Lv.1 Natural Regeneration Lv.1 Heightened Senses Lv.3 Basic Swordsmanship Lv.1 Cut Lv.1 Basic Shield Skill Lv.2 Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv.1 Pain Resistance Lv.10 Bleed Resistance Lv.4 Stun Resistance Lv.1 Piercing Resistance Lv.1 Poison Resistance Lv.2 Paralysis Resistance Lv.4 Heat Resistance Lv.2 Burn Resistance Lv.2

Misc : The God of Adventure pities you.

‘The God of Adventure is taking pity on me?’

‘...Is she thinking “I pity that foolish mortal, making things so difficult for himself” to herself, as she watches me making those stupid decisions?’

‘Ah, shit... It irks me, and embarrasses me as well.’

Only other noteworthy changes were Heat and Burn Resistance and Natural Regeneration.

‘Did I get that Natural Regeneration while I was fainted?’

I never saw the message for it.

[Natural Regeneration (Lv.1)]

Description : Increases the speed at which your body recovers from injuries.

‘Mother, Father. Today, I have gotten 1 step closer to becoming a troll.’

‘If this skill becomes stronger, will I be able to regenerate a hand or a foot even after it gets cut off?’

‘If it's that good then I wouldn't need to rely on the Waiting Room, Healing fountain or Level ups as sole opportunities for

regeneration.'

Waiting Room was ok, but relying on Level up for healing was too dangerous.

This Tutorial world was different from the nice and user friendly game with proper interface.

Since it didn't show my experience bar, I had no idea when I would level up.

Plus, the amount of experience required to level up was increasing.

I mean, it was obvious that I would need more, but the amount of experience required was increasing too much.

From the way I felt it, each time I leveled up, it seemed like the experience required increased not by 2x, but by 2 .

If I excluded the Level ups, then the sources of regeneration I could rely on were the Waiting Room, Healing fountain and my used up healing potions.

Although weak, having a regenerative ability was welcome at this point.

'Now, with the potion fully applied, what to do?'

I stood up, stretched myself as I thought.

The heat had disappeared completely.

I walked back a few steps, but could not feel the heat again.

It seemed, from near the start when the heat began to pick up, to where I was a few moment ago, a distance which needed half a day to travel, was one big heat trap.

I walked forward a little, and could feel some chill ahead.

It seemed, it was a cold trap from here onwards.

‘Let's go back to the Waiting Room.’

It was a clear decision.

My current condition wasn't too bad, but I needed to prepare for the cold which would come next.

But before all that, I needed to improve my heat and burn resistance as well.

‘Let's take some time increasing that burn and heat resistance, so that it rises quite high.’

‘Same goes for the poison.’

‘I would assume that, until the 2nd floor ends, all the arrows are tipped with poison.’

I was too excited from the newfound strength I gained from the 1st round.

I thought with such positive outcome, I would be able to navigate through this Hell difficulty.

My thinking was too lazy.

‘Let's be calm, thorough, think and think again before moving.’

‘Let's not make the same mistake.’

As I confirmed that to myself, I ran toward the Waiting Room.

Chapter 25 - Tutorial 2nd Floor (Part 6)

[Round 2, Day 19. 6:30]

Yawn

‘It seems I’m not sleeping enough, yawning as soon as I wake up.’

I did a little stretching as I got off the bed.

‘Time to start another day.’

It was impossible to tell morning, noon and night apart in this world, but I had been living a routinely life, having planned time for sleep, meals and work times in my time schedule.

Not only did it help to use my time to the fullest, by repeating a certain action in a day, it made the Tutorial into a routine which helped to increase my focus.

Of course, this idea of mine doesn't include any professional advice, and I was merely mimicking the schedules given to me back when I was an active professional player.

Just before I retired, the team hired a physical coach, who looked after us by giving many advices including daily patterns.

It was to help me with my declining skills, but I always dealt with him harshly due to constantly being on the edge from stress.

I can't even remember his name.

It would've been nice if I stayed on his good side and learnt a few things from him.

After the brief stretching, I did a light jogging following the walls of the Waiting Room.

After the 30 minute jog, I had a simple breakfast.

You didn't feel hunger in the Waiting Room, but this was also to create a daily routine.

Eating something also makes you feel better.

I opened the Community as I was eating the jerkies and the riceballs I bought using the points from the 1st floor.

There were a lot of funny stories that were being posted by the newcomers from the 2nd round.

All the stories about the real world in the past month.

It seemed so peaceful that it felt unrealistic.

How a certain idol group had come back,

how a new blockbuster superhero movie was amazing,

how the result of president election in America was unexpected,

how there was a hidden ruling power in the [Blue House](#) exposed.

(TN: Blue House is the building for Korea's president, equivalent to White House in America. There was a recent event where one of the president's aides had been running the country using the president as a puppet, and it's a reference to that.)

[Lee Hoi Chang, Floor 2: Hey, honestly that sounds like horseshit to me. We've been making jokes that Korea is like hell but, that's just too far don't you think?]

[Jung Jin Soo, Floor 2: Yea maybe this is just a prank made by all the new kids in 2nd Round?]

[Kim Kyoung Jin, Floor 1: I'm telling you, it's real.]

[Kim Sun Young, Floor 1: I know it sounds unbelievable... Ah, it sounds more like a lie when we try to explain it...]

The Community was not just updating the real world news from the newcomers, but also releasing new information found by the

1st Rounders as well.

Most of it was information gathered by asking one of the supervisors you can meet by clearing the Floor, like Kirikiri.

At first, nobody wanted to share their information, but the atmosphere had changed since then.

It seemed the leading clearers in Normal Difficulty have begun to compete against each other.

When you looked at it, it looked no different from watching a group of peacocks shaking their tails to show them off.

Perhaps because of this strange environment, many of the people took pride in their status, image and friendships in the Community.

Well it was all worth it for me, since I could easily gain new information.

But, not all information was useful.

There were a few trolls who just wanted attention, while others seemed like they were just posting their fantasies.

And I was designated as one of them as well.

Mainly due to the information I released about the Hell Difficulty at the start of Round 2.

And lastly, there was a son of a bitch who spread false information around.

Of course, the bastard's name was discredited, to prevent anyone from Round 2 to ever listening to him.

But not all the information was unreliable.

Lee Young Jin in normal difficulty had already reached Floor 6.

Dear god, Floor 6.

It means he climbed each floor in an average time of 7 days.

That's amazing speed.

Like Lee Young Jin, some of those who were trying to clear the Tutorial quickly had been releasing their newfound informations they gained from the Supervisors to the Community.

They even made surveys to vote for which questions to ask, as they prepared for the boss rooms.

Most of the useful information in the Community was from these

leading adventurers.

The most important information of it all was about clearing the Tutorial and how to return to our world.

It was first found by someone in Easy Difficulty after reaching Floor 5.

They said you could return to the real world after clearing Floor 100 in the Tutorial.

But there were many who didn't believe this information.

It would gain credibility if more adventurers asked the same question and received the same answer.

Anyway, this information was like a ray of hope to the many people in the Tutorial.

The same went for me.

It was just that, how long would it take for me to reach Floor 100, when it was so hard to even survive in this place.

Just thinking about it made me sad.

It was like I was walking in a pitch dark tunnel, with no sense of

time, then hearing that there just might be an exit at the end of the tunnel.

And I better focused on the present, if I wanted to see that future.

I couldn't forget about the danger to the present from distracting myself by the gains I would have in an uncertain future.

There was information about possible bonus rewards that could be gained by clearing multiple floors in a single round.

To summarise, a significant amount of points was given.

But, many have decided that it was better to focus on growing our stats rather than the bonus points.

The main strategy to focus on growth in the lower stages remained.

And...

[Difficulty Hell, Forums (1/1)]

Not a single newcomer in Hell Difficulty had survived.

I had prayed for their survival, but it was for naught.

Considering how much thought and effort I had put in for their survival, I was surprisingly apathetic about it.

Was it because I felt the same thing in Round 1?

Or, did I know that surviving through those countless deadly traps was impossible in the first place?

It was not odd that an average person couldn't survive in Hell Difficulty.

Infact, I was an outlier by reaching up to Floor 2.

If anyone else survived through the 1st floor, I would think that the gods had given their divine protection to them.

I didn't feel sadness, but I still felt bitter.

I quickly turned the Community off before I got depressed again.

"Status"

‘Now, time to check the stats.’

After the description of Battle Focus's hidden active skill was

unlocked, I had been checking on the Status routinely to check for any changes.

Personally, I had been wishing for a description of Wind Spirit's Blessing's status effects and the conditions to activate it.

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv.7

Strength : 12

Dexterity : 32

Vitality : 18

Mana : 22

Skills : Battle Focus Lv.7 Willpower Lv.5 Awakening Lv.1
Night Vision Lv.2 Brighter Vision Lv.1 Charge Lv.2 Natural
Regeneration Lv.2 Improved Senses Lv.4 Increased Field of
Vision Lv.1 Tough Skin Lv.1 Basic Swordsmanship Lv.1 Cut Lv.1
Basic Shield Skill Lv.2 Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv.1 Pain
Resistance Lv.11 Bleed Resistance Lv.4 Stun Resistance Lv.2
Pierce Resistance Lv.2 Poison Resistance Lv.4 Paralysis
Resistance Lv.6 Heat Resistance Lv.4 Burn Resistance Lv.6 Cold
Resistance Lv.4 Frostbite Resistance Lv.3

Misc : The God of Adventure pities you.

It showed all the effort I had put in until recently.

At first, all it had were strength, dexterity, vitality and mana, but it has gotten quite long now.

‘If there was one thing bothering me, it's that the god of adventure is still pitying me.’

‘It's been a few days since I almost died from a mistake, but they still feel sorry for me.’

‘What's [their](#) problem?’

(TN: Author's ambiguous about the gender of the gods, so I'm using gender neutral words.)

The most notable changes were Willpower's increase and gaining of Increased Field of Vision and Tough Skin.

How to use or improve the Willpower skill was still a mystery.

I thought I would find out its effect once its level increases.

Increased Field of Vision literally increased my field of vision.

It was not just seeing in a wider angle,

but closer to increasing the field of vision around the object I am

focusing on.

Humans usually can't focus on everything they see.

From their large field of view, they apply their attention and decision making on a small area of focus, but just by having it larger, I can see and judge more than others.

It's what is often described as an athlete's ability to 'assess the field' or 'good eye' by others.

And, it was one of the abilities I had when I was a professional gamer too.

By having a skill on top of my natural ability, its effect would be tremendous.

Tough Skin literally made my skin tougher and stronger.

I gained it as I increased the Resistances for heat, frostbite and pierce.

It was not to the stage of not being cut by swords or pierced by arrows, but it felt tougher when I pinched it.

It felt more like cow leather rather than human skin.

It felt rather disgusting if I kept feeling it.

The last changes I should mention are my resistances.

In the last few days, I had been focusing on the growth of my resistances, resulting in their levels raising.

Although recently, this growth seemed to had stopped.

‘Now, my monitoring is complete, time to start my day.’

[Will you enter the Tutorial Stage?]

Chapter 26 - Tutorial 2nd Floor (Part 7)

"Huaah, I can finally breath again."

[Round 2, Day 20. 13:20]

I took off the blanket I used to protect myself from heat and placed it in the Inventory as soon as the heat disappeared.

I had had many return journeys in this heat area and increased my resistance to it, but running for a long period of time while dodging arrows in extreme heat was still tiring.

Both physically and mentally.

Now I took out thick clothes and a cape to prepare for the cold.

I placed some heat stones in the pockets of the outer clothes to function as a hotpack.

Next, I equipped a scarf, a hat and some gloves.

Then I began to run slowly.

Soon after, the cold could be felt but the clothes did well to act as a barrier.

Since items which help in combat or aid in completing the floor were not sold when the round began, I had to buy the cloth, leather and sewing set and make them myself personally.

Truthfully, these weren't made because of necessity.

I began to feel that I was losing my mind in this dull and bloodthirsty environment.

These clothes were made as a hobby to hopefully aid my mental health.

I could feel a sense of achievement wearing these soft handmade clothes.

My satisfaction came more from the sense of achievement rather than their ability to keep me warm.

It was worth it to reduce my sleeping time to make these, since I couldn't lose any of my working time.

‘I wonder if I'll get any crafting skills.’

‘Perhaps I'll try sculpting as well.’

Recently, none of my resistance skills had increased in level.

Poison, heat, cold resistances had stopped at level 4, and frostbite was still level 3.

I had spent at least 18 hours trying to improve these resistances, but despite my efforts none of them showed signs of improvement.

It was a shame that I couldn't see the progress for the skills' experience.

I was starting to think the reason the resistances weren't increasing wasn't because of a ridiculously high experience requirement, but the highest limit I could reach from the traps in the 2nd floor.

Otherwise, there was no way they would be at a standstill for so long.

An evidence which supported this was my heat resistance, which had gone beyond level 4 and had reached level 6, by making a fire to burn myself without using traps.

‘So, today's goal is not to farm for my skills, but to progress through the Tutorial.’

‘It is time to leave the 2nd floor.’

I raised my running speed to bring out my Wind Spirit's

Blessing's acceleration buff.

With the now familiar speed came the bone chilling winds cutting at my face.

Many arrows flew behind me menacingly.

One of the greatest advantages in running at this speed was not in movement, but the fact that I could ignore most of the arrow traps.

Some arrows still had to be dodged or blocked due to their path, but I had already memorised all of them.

With a thud, one arrow lodged into my shield.

There weren't any arrows I needed to worry about after this for a long time.

I just kept on running.

It felt like my hat was about to fly off running at this speed, so I put it back in the inventory.

I couldn't lose it here.

I had put all my effort in it.

The temperature had gone significantly lower at this point.

The cold winds lacing at my face were getting quite painful.

Having no other choice, I dropped my speed.

‘Damn, how can my resistance level not increase, even with this much pain from the cold.’

‘It feels very bitter.’

With the drop in speed, I had to start focusing on the arrows again.

There was no dangers though, since I knew all their patterns and their trajectories.

My hands and feet began to lose their feeling.

I checked on my wrist after pulling the glove down, and I could start seeing erythema, a sign of 1st degree frostbite.

‘Damn it, and the resistance level still won't go up!’

‘How unfair!’

I took some heat stones out from the inventory.

Then shoved them into each of my gloves and shoes.

When the heat stones touched my skin, I could hear the searing noise and a burning smell, but I ignored it.

I had already raised the Burn Resistance to level 6, and pain wasn't much of an issue to me anymore.

It was all worth it in the end by getting a few burns to buy myself some time before the frostbite began to affect my nerves.

I could raise my resistance skill while at it as well.

‘It's the last trap now.’

[Battle Concentration]

It was a trap without a pattern, just like the last trap of the 1st floor.

‘Is the last trap of each floor being a no pattern trap a pattern in itself?’

‘Is a pattern of no pattern a pattern? Or, is no pattern pattern a no pattern?’

This last trap posed no threat to me as well.

My improved sense could feel the arrow's location and its trajectory the moment it was fired, and if I could sense it, I could almost certainly dodge it unless something extreme happened.

With the combination of improved reflexes and speed from my dexterity stats and the experience I had gained, dodging arrows had become an art for me.

I easily passed through the trap, and turned off the Battle Concentration.

After a few steps, the cold dissipated, and a healing fountain appeared.

Since I had gotten this far without getting too injured so many times now, I felt quite apathetic at the sight of it.

I took a few sips to recover my limbs from the slight frostbite and burns and stepped forward.

Beyond the heavy fog blocking the path, there stood a giant stone door.

This was the second boss room I would be challenging.

Well, there was nothing like a boss in it, but the Community seemed to call the last room as boss room.

In different difficulties, they actually got a boss monster in it at times.

With a heavy sound, the giant door opened.

I quietly entered.

The boss room was a circular stone room, which seemed quite familiar.

‘Ah, it's similar to the Seokguram's inner area I've been to when I went to Gyeongju for a field trip from school.’

‘The differences would be that there's no statue of buddha in the centre, and that it's much wider.’

The stone door shut loudly just like it did in the 1st floor.

I pushed the door as hard as I could.

It didn't move, as expected.

This was the most dangerous aspect of the boss room.

That you couldn't stop the challenge half-way.

And since its challenges were literally life threatening, it truly was a gateway to hell.

Booong-

A blue portal appeared with a sound I had heard so much that I had gotten quite fond of it.

‘A portal?’

[Would you like to return to 2nd Floor Waiting Room?]

‘What's this?’

‘Why would a portal show itself in a boss room?’

‘To the Waiting Room no less.’

Another text showed itself before I could come back from the confusion.

[Stay in the room for at least 3 hours]

The confusion quickly became disbelief.

‘Analyse.’

‘Let's quickly analyse the situation.’

At least 3 hours.

Therefore, if I didn't have at least 3 hours to spare when I challenged the boss room, I would fail without even getting a chance.

And in the next round, I would have to try again.

It may have not been an issue now, but it was good to remember this.

‘And, the message to stay in the room and the portal.’

‘Staying in the room is the objective itself.’

‘The portal must be part of it.’

‘To make the challenger give up on their own volition.’

To sum it all up, the theme of the boss room was related to patience.

What could possibly come out for them to so nicely create an escape portal to the waiting room?

The poison filled darts and arrows, and the heat and cold traps which followed afterwards.

They could also be included on the theme of patience.

At first, you had to mentally endure through the cold and heat, and once you got past that stage, the body which began to break down was tested instead.

Then, this boss room would likely demand physical or mental endurance from its challengers.

And in order to break their endurance, they put a portal which led to the Waiting Room, to seduce them into taking the easy path.

‘It was a right idea to raise my resistances to their highest.’

And I was not worried about my mental fortitude as well.

‘I’ll take you on.’

‘Come! How will you test my patience?’

[The trial will begin in 30 seconds]

‘Uh...hm, yea.’

‘You're still quite considerate aren't you.’

Chapter 27 - Tutorial 2nd Floor (Part 8)

[Please stay for at least 3 hours.]

[The trial of the gateway will begin in 30 seconds.]

My curiosity was growing.

I was able to quickly grasp the theme of the 1st floor boss room, however I couldn't quite do that for the 2nd floor one.

‘I wonder what kind of trial will appear before me?’

‘Will it just be the poison, cold and heat of the second floor again?’

‘Huh?’

‘I couldn't see the message telling me about the time.’

‘Is this just telling me to withstand this without knowing the time?’

As I was trying to figure this out in my head, I heard the voice of

the message resonating:

[The trial of the gateway will commence.]

[Withstand your most painful times experienced.]

‘Painful memories, huh.’

‘Is it telling me to endure the pain of my past memories?’

‘I’m pretty sure most of my painful memories would be the experiences within the tutorial.’

I thought this was a tutorial that just fired arrows at you day in day out, but this was quite a sophisticated trap indeed.

Since I didn’t know what would come out, I lowered my stance and stayed right nearby to the waiting room portal.

Although I shouldn’t be even thinking of going back to the waiting room through the portal, my highest priority was my life.

It would be retarded to not grab the lifeline when you could clearly see it.

Hearing a ringing background noise, I assumed the trial was about to begin.

And for a moment I lost consciousness.

3 seconds? 5 seconds? It was short, but I just straight up fainted I guess.

‘What is this?’

My body was paralyzed by nervousness.

I couldn’t prepare for this type of attack.

A clear image was projected within my head which was once filled with complicated and jumbled thoughts.

It felt like I was seeing things in 2 perspectives.

The perspective of my actual body in the boss room and the perspective of the image in this holographic world it was suspended in.

I could feel both clearly.

‘What is this?’

‘Is this a type of psychological attack?’

I focused on the perspective of my body.

The waiting room portal was still in front of my eyes.

I could go back whenever I wanted.

With the confidence I gained from that certainty, I focused on the image in the world in my head.

Soon I was able to realise the situation my projection was in.

Tutorial 1sts floor, 1st trap.

It was just before I approached this trap,

It was my memory of that time.

As expected, this was my most painful memory.

I saw myself holding the sword and shield with such a grip and I could also see myself shaking with every centimetre of my body as I took baby steps forward.

Was I shaking that much back then?

I could feel the nervousness and anxiety I had felt.

It felt like I was possessed by myself from the past.

The sensation, the emotions of that time, very...too clearly...

Pook – Pook –

With those sounds, the arrows pierced the shield.

I couldn't tell this at all.

I accidentally blocked the third arrow...and the last arrow pierced my ankle.

I felt an excruciating, truly excruciating pain in my ankle.

Then it clicked.

It was the pain without the pain resistance skill.

The pain of the arrow itself was added with the horror, the despair, the regret etc. all that emotion was mixed up as an effect of not having the pain resistance skill.

It was just as if I had just been hit by an arrow.

‘Hmm... It hurts a lot but...’

‘Well...if it hurts it hurts.’

‘When hasn’t it?’

Even without the pain resistance skill, I could endure this type of pain whenever.

It wasn’t like the pain resistance skill even lessened the pain at all.

‘Will it be just a constant repeat of this for 3 hours?’

‘That’s disappointing.’

I calmly endured the pain of my projection.

It was actually harder to see myself screaming and crying like a dying duck.

I looked at myself with a pitiful look as I saw my projection crying and crawling back to the waiting room.

Then the projection stopped.

‘What is it now?’

Soon, a new projection lied ahead of me.

This was the 2nd floor.

I had lit a fire in the corner of the waiting room.

Ah, this was the self-harm I inflicted a few days ago.

The sword I heated on top the fire was quite red

As soon as I poked the inside of my leg with it, with a ‘sizzle’ I felt an intense pain as my flesh cooked.

It was the most efficient way to level up my pain resistance, piercing resistance, haemorrhage resistance and burn resistance all at once.

My projection had a slight grin on its face.

‘Wow I do look like some mad man. Hahahaha.’

This time again, I felt a pain that was not diminished by the resistance skill.

This was quite a fresh pain.

Back then I had levelled up my resistance skill quite a bit, so I wouldn't have felt this amount of pain through that kind of filter.

Well, this wasn't too bad of an experience.

Like watching a movie I watched my projection pretty much doing cheap labour, but then the projection stopped again.

[The god of adventure feels embarrassment as he watches you.]

‘Why is that guy so interested in me?’

The message before told me to withstand my most painful times.

If it stays like this, I think I will be able to get through it quite easily.

Then the projections started again.

I looked pretty young in this.

‘Is this a memory from before the tutorial?’

I could see myself in a school uniform.

‘Was that my secondary school uniform? Or my high-school one?’

Soon, I was able to tell what kind of horrific event my projection was in.

I was facing a girl in the school hall where many hundreds of students gathered in.

It was my memory from my second year of secondary school.

‘Oh my god!’

‘No.’

‘Don’t do this.’

‘Please.’

‘Don’t.’

The surrounding students beamed of curiosity looking towards me.

A flustered girl.

A shaking me trying to say the words he had prepared.

In the middle of a hall of mumbling, my projection finally said what he had prepared:

[I like you. Let's go on a date.]

The cheers and screams exploded from the crowd.

The girl exploded also, in tears and collapsed to the ground from the overwhelming crowd.

I turned pale white and just stood there watching her.

It was the worst part of my past.

‘Ahhhhhhhh.’

'Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.'

It felt like my guts were turning inside out.

This was so much more painful than the first two memories I experienced.

‘Damn this.’

‘Since the physically painful memories weren’t working, you guys are going to attack me psychologically now huh?’

‘Did you HAVE to choose this memory though? You bastards!’

I must have bitten my tongue or something due to the surprise, I tasted blood.

Bear in mind that one student in that hall had filmed that proposal on their phone and uploaded that when I debuted as a pro-gamer. It was quite widely known.

EEEEEEUUUUUUUUUUUGGGGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHHH

The projections stopped again for a brief moment and a new one appeared.

This one was... ‘Fuck, fuck!’

This was something I really didn’t want to remember.

I could feel my face going pale from the lack of blood.

‘...I have to withstand this for 3 hours?’

Myself in the projection was standing still in a room pouring with cries.

At my father's funeral.

Blearugh

I emptied my insides but the rumbling wouldn't stop.

I cleaned whatever it was running down my face with my sleeves.

I couldn't avoid this projection by simply looking away or closing my eyes.

This was being played in my head.

These projections I couldn't avoid were being constantly played with relation to my father.

It was as if they had found a weakness and just focus fired.

'These fucking remorseless cunts.'

The memory of the day before my father died in hospital played within my head.

The rage over this dog-shit like trap had subsided and it was overrun by the emotions of regret, despair, shame and guilt.

[Isn't it time you stopped playing that game?]

My father told me this out of the blue when I was called to the hospital.

That one lifeless sentence from my father fucked me up.

Had he never thought about how much I had endured, fought and all-ined for this?

Even once?

Did he not know how I was earning the money for this hospital's fees?

Did I still look like a child that was doing what he wanted?

I got angry at him as he talked like that to me in that tone.

He also retaliated.

In result, the conversation found no common ground like two

separate parallel lines and the worst came to the worst, it ended.

The next day I got a phone call that my father had died during surgery.

Why did he say those things to me the day before his surgery?

Why didn't he even tell me about the day of the surgery?

I couldn't even pay attention to that back then.

My sister thought that since there was that large argument between my father and me the surgery went wrong.

I couldn't justify myself at the funeral as she screamed and swore at me.

Because I thought the same way.

It was because of me.

I couldn't leave this hole of guilt.

From that point onwards my life had slowly deteriorated.

My shaky hands grabbed the knife on the floor.

And with all my might, I stabbed my thigh.

Chapter 28 - Tutorial 2nd Floor (Part 9)

I could taste blood and pebbles in my mouth, perhaps I've shattered my teeth.

My tears continued to flow as I suppressed the sounds of moaning.

The past emotions that I've felt in the illusion was diffusing into my head,

And those past feelings have rooted into the present.

I reached out for the sword that was on the floor with my shaking hands, and with all my strength, plunged it into my thigh.

Blood splattered on my face, and the pain I'm used to could be felt.

This sharp, but somewhat familiar agony brought me back to the present.

That was just the memory of the past.

I'm stuck in the Tutorial, being attacked by a psychological attack.

It's in the past, it's in the past.

Once more, I stab into my leg.

Yes, it's no different from this pain.

Just a process of enduring, gaining a skill, and growing stronger.

Back then, because of those memories, from the guilt and regret, I've driven myself into ruin.

Turning back onto the future, looking only into the past, with alcohol in hand.

But that must change now.

The sword's edge drove into the inner muscle of my thigh.

I couldn't deny, nor redo my past.

Those memories may have imbedded into myself and swallowed me whole in the past,

But I will use it as a pedestal for my growth.

It's my guilt, regret and mistake.

If this was how the Tutorial's trial would come at me,

I can't deny, look away or evade it anymore.

It's time to look straight at it, and bear it with me.

I've made my decision.

The tears didn't stop, the body shook, my head was spinning to the point of throwing up.

But all thoughts of denying that past, to stop the illusion,

and the thought of escaping into the portal disappeared.

The emotions in my head have dyed back into anger.

You fucking bastards.

You guys are doing all kinds of fucked up shit now.

I'll take it all.

The memories of the past has changed.

The memories of my father that has gone on for minutes, or

perhaps hours have stopped.

The illusion now is when I was a professional gamer, just before my retirement.

[Lee Ho Jae was indeed a great player. His accomplishments are astounding. But that's all before I started my career isn't it? Lee Ho Jae may be a player with great talent, but that is all. I will show you how effort can beat a genius]

Fucking asshole.

Such rude words from a junior, you could hardly believe it was said in an interview.

He went on as if it's a known fact that I'm a lazy player who wouldn't even train.

Days before the match, that interview has caused many debates on the internet, and everyone's attention was fixed onto the result of the match.

And it was my utter defeat.

The illusion's point of view changed, and it showed my defeated look on the day of the match, after all the matches were played.

Within the isolated booth, the feelings of humiliation, shame, loss, anger and annoyance as I watched the victor's ceremony.

Those feelings could be felt clearly.

I raise the sword once more, and slice the skin of my leg thinly.

Rather than be swept away by the torrent of the emotion from the past, I fixated onto the feelings of anger alone.

I'll show you how far I can go when you trigger me.

It's time to improve psychological attack resistance.

I take out a jerky from the inventory, chewing away at it.

I'm feeling alittle dizzy, whether it's because I've cried too much, or bled too much.

The memories continue to show in my head.

Since I can't see the present time, I can't tell how long it has been since I've been here.

Ofcourse, it's easily past 3 hours now.

Since a portal to leave the boss room has been created.

But, I have no thoughts of leaving this place.

The memories of my father, my career, my school life have already been repeated now.

Rather than being painful, I began to feel sorry for my family and friends, especially for my father.

They wouldn't like the fact that they are being used for a trial like this.

I'm not creating this illusion, but it's being made because of me.

At this point, I'm starting to see ridiculous monsters of my childish nightmares come to rip my body into pieces.

So that's how it feels when that happens.

Well, nothing special here.

But isn't it hard to say this is my memory now.

Half of it's just fiction.

What memories will come out after this.

The memories of Tutorial have all been used now.

The memories of being scolded by parents, and nightmares, have been repeated to the point of boredom too.

Truth be told, what takes my attention isn't the boring illusion, but all the voyeurs that have taken too much interest in me.

[The God of Adventures is impressed by your actions]

[The God of Coldness is curious about you]

[The God of Warrior has taken an interest in you]

[The God of Slowness send praise to your determination]

[The God of Light has taken an interest in you]

[The God of Devotion pities you]

Seems there's still someone who's pitying on me.

These messages have been coming repeatedly since long ago.

I didn't know there were so many gods other than the God of Adventures.

Seems like there's more than 10.

As I was busying myself with those thoughts, multiple alarms rang in my head along with messages.

[Congratulations. You are the first to completely conquer the last trial of Floor 2]

[You have recieved Mind corruption immunity Lv. 1]

[All status increase by 5]

[Fear resistance Lv.1, Illusion resistance Lv.1, Hallucination resistance Lv.2, Confusion resistance Lv.2 have been combined into Mind corruption immunity Lv.1]

[You have cleared Tutorial, Hell difficulty Floor 2]

[All status effects and injuries are healed]

[You have receieved 1000 points as reward for clearing]

[You have received 1000 bonus points for being first to clear the floor]

[Many gods show positive reaction to you. You have received 5500 points]

[Many gods show negative reaction to you. 400 points have been deducted]

It's finished.

It was a very long boss room.

Some things to review are mental corruption immunity skill and the god's reactions.

Let's think later, there are still more messages coming.

[Additional reward are being given according to play record]

[The God of Slowness wishes to gift some of her powers instead of additional reward. Will you accept?]

...?

Powers?

Did you say powers?

My head stopped at this unexpected development.

Yes. Uhuh. [Ne](#). Accept. Give me. Give!

(original say yes in korean, so i wrote korean yes in english)

[You have received Blink Emblem Lv. Max]

Blink Emblem...

Let's read the message slowly.

"Status."

[Mental corruption immunity (Lv.1)]

Description: You are immune to all psychological attacks below certain threshold.

A new skill received from the Boss room by combining 4

resistance skills.

Normally in games, the greatest threats for a physical warrior like me is psychological cc.

It seems like it will be a good line of defense for such problems.

Not to mention this is immunity, not resistance.

Good.

[Blink Emblem (Lv. Max)]

Description: God of Slowness, one who loves the enduring and the patient, has gifted some of her powers to her possible apostle. If the one gifted with her powers were to turn away from her, she may become displeased greatly.

... How is this a description.

It's a blackmail written in the form of description.

So it wasn't a present, but a pact.

Can I undo this at this point...

But what kind of skill is this?

Why isn't there a single word of functional description .

[The God of Adventures is disappointed in you]

What's this guy on about now.

I should ask Kirikiri about the gods.

And... conquering the trial.

If it says trial, is it limited to the boss room?

If the reward for conquering is a skill like mental corruption immunity, then I should try to aim for it as much as possible.

After sorting out my thoughts, I stretch and loosen my body.

Then I sit quietly on the floor, which is wet with the blood from my legs.

Haah, so peaceful.

Maybe I might reach the Nirvana if I were to go on a pilgrim now.

It's the calmness you feel after crying for a long time.

Was it really because of the crying,

Or, is it the effect of mental corruption immunity?

Or maybe it's the fact that I've made through another ordeal, and the sense of growth which comes with it.

[Round 2, Day 23, 21:30]

Um.

... It's been 3 days.

I didn't think so much time would of passed.

I thought it'd atmost be 1 day.

No wonder I've been feeling hungry.

Everything's sorted now.

It's time to leave this 2nd floor boss room.

I took a few steps, and reach for the portal in the corner.

Teleport.

My vision turned white, then showed the green grassland I've seen before.

And,

"Hello! It's been a while! Welcome!"

Greeting as she was hopping towards me, was the white rabbit girl, Kirikiri.

Chapter 29 - Tutorial 2nd Floor (Part 10)

"There isn't any."

Kirikiri replied with a face smeared with whipped cream.

Many times has Kirikiri's advices provide great help in passing through the 2nd floor, and each time I have told myself to speak my appreciation to her.

So, the moment I met her, along with a word of thanks, I bought a whipped cream cake from the shop as a present.

An expensive cake, almost the same price as my leather armour.

Spending so much points on a cake felt like a waste, but that thought disappeared soon after.

The cake was amaizing.

Really.

Perhaps it's because I've been eating just jerkies, riceballs, water and my own blood and flesh for the last 2 months.

The sweetness of the cake was enought to make a culinary revolution.

Kirikiri was scouring through the cake next to me without a break, smearing the cream all over her mouth, but I could understand completely.

Because it's that delicious!.

And it looks cute to watch.

"What did you say again?"

"There isn't any."

"What?"

I had just asked Kirikiri for advices on the 3rd floor.

I was hoping for an answer akin to the advices on the status effect potions for the 2nd floor.

I asked for just about any advice that can help, but the answer was.

"Ah, THERE IS NONE."

Hey, what happened to your speech.

Were you always like this?

"There isn't any advice? What do you mean?"

"It's because you grew too fast. I can give advices, but as for advices that will help you, doesn't exist."

Kirikiri put her hands on the side of her waist and smiled brightly, proud of her self that she managed to explain it so well.

Hm... if that's the case I've not no complaints.

It seems I'll be able to pass through 3rd floor without much dangers.

I was quickly convinced, as I knew how fast my growth has been aswell.

"Hm... then, can you tell me what happened to the people in the 1st floor that entered the hell difficulty on Round 2?"

Kirikiri crouched and thought for a moment at my question.

"It's close. Maybe if you use all of your quota?"

Does quota mean opportunity to ask a question?

It seems it isn't the number of questions that are limited, but each question has a price.

"Let's drop it then. I'll ask something else."

Just what happened in the 1st floor, that after not a single reply, everyone would get wiped out.

I'm curious.

But, that's it.

They are strangers to me.

And have nothing to do with me.

Maybe I'll ask when I have so much quota that it's just rotting away.

There are more curious, and important questions out there.

"Hm... then can you explain to me what Blink Emblem skill is?"

"Yep!"

Kirikiri replied confidently, crouched on the spot, and began to think.

Then,

She started to hop away to somewhere else.

That stupid idiot, she's doing it again.

"Kirikiri! Play after you explain first!"

With those words, Kirikiri turned around, and hopped back toward me.

"Yep! I'll explain it!"

Yes, please...

"Blink Emblem is a power bestowed by the God of Slowness! Challengers you achieve greater result than a certain threshold can receive these gifts from gods instead of additional rewards!"

"And?"

"Also, all gods have only 1 chance to gift their powers to the challengers! This information is a bonus!"

But that's not what I asked.

Oh well it's still useful. Nice service.

That God of Slowness has used her one and only chance to give me her powers.

I'm starting to understand the description on the skill.

There are too many things I don't know about the relationship between gods and Challengers.

What do the gods want from the Challengers, and what do the Challengers give back in return.

This information takes utmost priority when I have enough quota saved up to ask about gods.

"Kirikiri, what I want is the explanation of the effect Blink Emblem has. With a thorough explanation."

"Yep!"

With a loud reply, Kirikiri showed off her trademark smile filled with pride.

"... I said, explain it."

"I've made it so you can read it on Status window when you

return to 3rd Floor Waiting Room!"

Really.

"Really?"

"Yep!"

I'm worried.

"Just making sure. If I go to the 3rd Floor Waiting Room, I will have a detailed explanation of it's effect right?"

"Yep!"

"Huuh... then can I also get a detailed explanation for the Wind Spirit's Blessings?"

"Yep! Got it."

I'm getting worried, she's replying way too fast.

Well, I'll just trust her for now.

"If I don't get a good explanation for either of them, the next time I see you, I'll buy 2 cakes, and eat both of them without sharing alright?"

"No! Don't!"

Kirikiri screamed as she jumped at me.

I quickly try to pull her away as she try to grab onto me.

She acts no different from my nephew when he was young.

You're gonna smear the cream on me.

She was easily pulled away, but she continued to run at me many times.

"Ah, fine. I won't do it."

With those words, Kirikiri stopped her reckless charges.

I've read a thread about the manager's powers in the Community.

It seems someone picked a fight against the managers in the 1st round.

He was suppressed by being beaten almost to death.

But why is she so weak?

Her strength is comparable to that of a normal person.

"Ah, Kirikiri. Is it true that you can exit to the real world if you clear 100th floor?"

I threw the most heated question in the Community at her.

Her reply was,

"Nope. I can't tell you yet. Ask something else."

I knew it.

I did ask about the skills just before.

"then, about the gods..."

"Nope. Information about the gods are expensive!"

Ah, is that so...

Nothing seems to be working out right now.

"Then about the identity of the managers?"

She declined once more, explaining that I lack the quota to ask the question.

"Ah, what about that conquering the trial? Does it only apply to the last trial of the floor?"

"Nope. Conquering is just a mistake that was made during the creation of the trial."

"Mistake? What do you mean?"

"I can't tell that aswell. Heh."

Just what can you tell right now, brat.

Since she told me to ask something else,

I must still have some quota left.

"Then what's the colour of your underwear right now?"

"Kyaong!"

Kirikiri used Punch!

It wasn't very effective!

"No privacy questions!"

"There are rules about that too? Do they value personal space in here?"

"Yep! Privacy is very expensive!"

So you'll tell me if I have enough quota saved up?

Then, what else do I have to ask.

A cheap, easy to answer question among the many informations I need.

"Kirikiri, at some point, my resistance skills stopped going up since Lvl 4. Why is that? Is there some sort of a limit to their levels?"

"Well. Yes. It's also a mistake during the creation part. You could call it a level cap. But usually you would never see the level cap of the skill... but to see it in just 1 round..."

Kirikiri crossed her head as she sighed.

Her ears swinging left and right as she did left an impression on me.

She didn't explain about the mistakes of the creation either.

"Do I have any quota left?"

"Nope. You've used it all. Can I eat that now?"

Looking at where Kirikiri was pointing, there was a cherry, left on top of a plate.

It seems she asked first, since it was the only cherry placed on the cake.

She's like a good child that had been educated well.

Or, perhaps, she was thinking that I would give it to her since I stopped eating the cake, because I was full.

"No."

Kirikiri ran at me immediately with a whine, struggling to get at it.

"Then let's decide who gets to eat it with a rock paper scissors. You know how to play it right?"

"Yep!"

"Rock paper scissors!"

I lost.

That brat. She had been holding scissors from the start, so I thought she would change it just at the end.

But she just continued with that scissor.

"Best of three."

Kirikiri jumped again, but I pushed the fact that since I bought the cake, I get to decide on the rules.

"Rock paper scissors!"

"Rock paper scissors."

COME BACK!

There was no way for me to lose, since she would show what she was gonna throw even before the match.

Tears began to form on Kirikiri's eyes, showing just how much she wanted that cherry.

Why didn't you just eat it instead of asking if that's the case.

As I stretch my arm and grab onto the cherry, the tears began to drop onto her cheeks.

Her pupils followed the cherry as I swing it left and right with a villanous face, with tears flowing like river.

Hm. It feels like taking candy from a child.

Isn't that great?

Hahahaha.

It might be fun to just eat the cherry and see Kirikiri bawl her eyes out, but being on her bad side may not be a good idea.

She clearly stated that the price for information is, potential for growth, achievement, and my amity with her.

Ahem.

"Now, since Kirikiri has given such good explanations, I will give this as a reward. You have to work hard from now on too ok."

"Yep! I will!"

With a loud reply, she took the cherry like it was precious, and began to nip away at the cherry.

There wasn't a hint of tears in her bright smiling face.

I smile at her cute, innocent look and stood up.

"Then, I'm off. See you later."

As I say my farewells, Kirikiri replied as she was hopping about.

"Come back soon! Buy me another cake!"

Ah, was the cake your main objective.

"If those skill descriptions are done well, then maybe."

"Yep. Good bye!"

It seems she's rather confident about the skill description, considering the way she replied.

My doubt began to fade.

I couldn't stop laughing, seeing how Kirikiri furiously waved her arms to send me off.

Is it because I have someone who can wish me farewell.

Or is it because she looks so cute doing that.

I was thinking whether I should tell her about the cream that's smeared all over her bright smile,

but decided to waved farewell, and stepped onto the portal.

Chapter 30 - Tutorial 3rd Floor

[Becareful. You'll die if you fall off]

[Sorry?]

[You'll die if you fall]

[Welcome to Tutorial Floor 3 Waiting Room]

[Round 2, Day 23, 23:22]

[Blink Emblem ((Lv.Max))]

Description: God of Slowness, one who loves the enduring and the patient, has gifted some of her powers to her possible apostle. If the one gifted with her powers were to turn away from her, she may become displeased greatly.

As the God of Slowness hates to move with haste, she moves objects within space and time controlled by her in a blink of an eye.

You can jump distances upto 5 times.

Once all jumps are used, it will go into 5 minute cooldown.

As this skill uses the divine powers of the God of Slowness, it does not require any mana, spirit or holy power from the user.

It's a movement skill.

I mean, how can a power from the God of Slowness be a movement skill.

There seems to be some contrast compared to her name.

I think the usefulness of the skill depends on the distance and the speed of the 'jump'.

I will have to test the function of the jump, but having a movement skill itself was quite a merit.

Movement skills are associated with survivability, and in combat aswell.

One of the great advantage here was that it does not require any power from myself to be used.

Plus, I can use it upto 5 times.

It's containing all the specs it needs to be op.

Now, let's test this skill.

Um... how do I say it?

Imba? OP?

It's not in the realm of just an OP skill.

this skill can ruin the balance of the difficulty, even if I consider the difficulty Hell presents here.

If a game had a skill like this, I'm sure all the players would of raged and demanded a nerf.

Ofcourse, I'm not mad because it's so good.

It's good! I'm happy!

I mean, for such good luck to happen on someone so misfortunate like me.

It feels like I'm being properly rewarded for the struggles until

now.

[Blink]

With one use, I moved 3 to 4 metres forward.

I could control the distance somewhat aswell.

It's not just a dash, but more of a teleport.

I am literally, moved in a blink of an eye.

It's quite similar to a certain skill of a certain character of a certain watch game.

I'm starting to wonder if I'm reaching the speed of light at this point.

Plus, I don't have to worry about the momentum from the blink.

All momentum disappears once I arrive at the location, and I can land softly.

There are infinite ways to use this.

If I use this while running, or falling,

I will lose all momentum my body holds, and arrive at location.

I won't have to worry about falls anymore.

What happens if there's an object between me and the target location?

As soon as I thought that question, I moved the bed in the corner of the room to the centre.

And used blink beyond the bed.

Bang! Badadadump!

I've hit my leg onto the bed, and rolled beyond for a few metres.

Seems like I've hit my head on the floor, as I felt lightheaded.

And the leg...

Well, I can see crushed bone popping out.

It healed quickly as I was inside the Waiting Room, but it was a shocking sight nonetheless.

I should not use it so freely when there are obstructions in the way.

The calves were aching from the pain that remained behind.

Maybe, I could use the speed to attack enemies,

but let's seal that idea for now.

It's not in my realm of control yet.

I've went through a lot of things in Tutorial, but this is the first time facing such a fictional, unscientific skill.

I think I'll need some practice to use it comfortably.

Let's put familiarising use of blink as top priority of Floor 3.

I also looked at another skill Kirikiri promised for explanation, the Wind Spirit's Blessings.

[Wind Spirit's Blessings Lv.1]

Description: A newly born windspirit's blessings are with you.

Dexterity + 10

Stage 1: Once reaching a certain speed, you gain the blessings of the forest.

Stage 2: Once reaching a certain speed, you gain the effect of acceleration.

Stage 3: ???

It's so easy to understand, when it's listed like this.

Blessing of the forest is what makes my body light and swift, while acceleration means literally acceleration.

I've also found out that there's stage 3 too.

It was a great idea to ask Kirikiri to explain it for me.

[Round 2, Day 24, 00:10]

it's time to sleep now.

I should take rest for now, and get used to using the Blink skill

while progressing through Floor 3 tomorrow.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 3: I'm serious. Are you guys taking responsibility if everyone dies because they didn't listen to me like last time?]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 3: No, fuck. How can I, prove it to anyone you retards. There's just me in Hell Difficulty]

There are still several people who don't believe in my words, and treat me like a liar.

It's not that I don't understand them, but if I don't sort this out, the people from next round won't believe my information aswell.

[Kim Sang Shik, Floor 4: Tbh he's the only one to survive among the 10 who entered, so it's somewhat believable]

[Lee Gee Jun, Floor 3: Well, if he bullshits, then everyone ends up dying cus of it]

[Kim Sang Shik, Floor 4: Well that's why noone can prove if he's saying the truth aswell.

[Lee Myung Sun, Floor 2: Doesn't Hell Difficulty sound scary? Why is Hell after Hard. Wouldn't it normally be Extreme or something?]

[Lee Jin Suk, Floor 1: I think it's ok to believe him. Everyone, except him, died at the start of Floor 1 in Hell. I know because I have the Community on all the time except sleeping. I'm sure they all died on the first trap]

And once again, a debate is happening on the Community.

Well, atleast there are more people on my side compared to the first time.

Since nobody survived Hell difficulty other than me, it seemed to be convincing the others that what I informed about the traps are true.

Meanwhile, someone sent a 1:1 message to me.

[Invitation to the Representative Confederation]

Hello, Lee Ho Jae. We are astonished by your accomplishments within the Hell Difficulty, and sending this message.

If you wish, I would like to explain to you the reason and goal of the Confederation.

I sincerely wish that you will join us on our endeavor.

We will wait for your reply.

Lee Chang Suk.

What is this.

Representative Confederation.

There has been significant activities in the Community recently, and I've started to feel something like society or factions are developing within.

But I didn't they were THIS active.

Is it a gathering for the Top challengers?

Lee Chang Suk, huh.

I don't remember that name from the Top Challengers.

It could just be a Top Challenger who doesn't reveal himself in the Community.

Hm...

Well I'll leave it for now.

If that confederation gains support from people, I may be able to improve my position in the Community, but I have no idea where or what that Confederation is for.

Never head of it too.

And, since I'm left all alone in Hell Difficulty, I really have no chance to meet anyone.

Let's just leave it.

I take out a cup from inventory, dip it in the Healing Fountain, and have a sip.

Now, what to do...

[Round 2, Day 25. 14:35]

After 2 days of progressing through the Floor 3, I managed to get to the Healing Fountain without any injuries.

Twice.

Yesterday, when I got the the Healing Fountain for the first time, I was so possessed by the greatness of the Blink skill, that I praised the Lord that is the God of Slowness.

[The God of Adventures feel disheartened]

I don't care about certain someone feeling depressed, I'm happy.

Anyway, I have decided that I won't grow anymore if I continue like this, so I decided to progress through the Floor without using Blink.

And, I succeeded at getting to the Fountain, unscathed, once again.

Ofcourse, I didn't get any level ups during the progress.

The theme of Floor 3's traps were tricks.

Hiding a trick within a pattern, to put the Challenger in danger.

Tricking through sound, or sight.

Showing a certain pattern, then striking when they are offguard, expecting the pattern to continue.

For example, the trap I've just passed was like this.

There are black and white stones arranged like a chess board.

And the trap springs when stepping on the black stone, with poison arrows literally covering the entire room.

It's fine if you step on the white stone.

But, on the last row, the trap springs whether you step on the black or white stone.

In the end, the Challenger must break through the arrow trap.

I too, panicked when the arrows came out despite stepping on the white stone.

And managed to break through, using Battle Focus and Blink to dodge the arrows.

On the second try, I didn't use blink, but since I remembered the order and the angles of the arrows, I could dodge them.

Even if you fall for the trick, if you can get out of the trap that follows it, there is no significant danger, and that is Floor 3.

There was a reason why Kirikiri said there's no real helpful

advices for Floor 3.

But even so, it's feeling alittle too easy.

Was it a throwaway stage?

I was hoping I could get some utility skills like Identify or Detect Trap, Remove Trap.

Adventure or dungeon skills given to Thieves or Adventurers in an RPG game.

But, despite my varying efforts to get that mystery skill, it failed.

I have not gained any skills.

It's just a waste of time at this point.

There was only one thing left.

The third floor's Boss Room.

Chapter 31 - Tutorial 3rd Floor (Part 2)

With a loud noise, the stone doors of the boss room opened.

Huh...

Beyond the stone doors was a view similar to that of a painting.

Two mountain peaks standing above the clouds.

It would of been very emotional experience, if it wasn't for the fact that I was standing on top of one of the peaks which was less than 4m in width and length.

The stone doors disappeared into thin air after leaving me behind on this peak.

What am I suppose to do on this tiny patch of ground.

One misstep and I'll fall to the floor which I can't even see from here.

The edges of the peak seemed to have been cut artificially.

There are no branches or gaps on the stone, so it's just one way down if I fall.

Looking down from the edge of the peak with my hands on the ground, I was beginning to get light headed.

Damn it, what's going to happen if I fall?

If I use the blink ability and remove all momentum on my body before hitting the ground, I will survive.

In theory.

I didn't want to prove it with an experiment either.

Not to mention I can't see what's underneath because of the clouds.

This is probably the greatest place in the universe for monks and saints who practice martial arts to meditate,

but for everything else, it's very uncomfortable.

Extreme winds pushed my body about.

I managed to hold on by lowering my body onto the floor.

Just standing on this place seems life threatening.

Plus, maybe because of the height, it was hard to breath.

As I was sighing at the ridiculous environment, the kind boss room message appeared as usual.

[Reach for the objective]

Sorry?

Objective?

From here?

The only 'objective' I can see with my eyes is the other peak few kilometres away from here.

The, a tile appeared in the air.

Square tile, identical in length and width.

Each dimentions were about 2m.

The tile which was green at the start, turned yellow, into red, and then fell.

Green, yellow, red, fall.

I've memorised the pattern.

After that.

A green bridge formed connecting this peak to the other peak waaay over there.

A bridge in thin air, extending for kilometres high in the clouds.

It was purely made of green tiles, with no pillars to support it.

Wait, can you even call this a bridge?

It's just tiles arranged in the air.

Even at this moment, the winds blew with the ferocity to drop me down the peak.

[Reach for the objective]

A message with an arrow pointing to the peak far into the distance showed.

You're kidding right?

Come on, this is too much.

Just think of the difficulty in the 3rd room's traps.

There's too much of a jump in difficulty.

I prayed, and prayed again in my mind, but the 'green' tile bridge proved what I feared the most in the worst possible way.

The very first tile in front of me turned from green to yellow.

Oh. My. God.

I think I figured out the theme of this boss room.

It's very similar to a running game type, often seen in a mobile game.

I must run forward, never stopping, and dodge the traps while I'm at it.

If I were to slow down, I'd be eaten by a monster from behind.

Well for this case, instead of a monster chasing from behind, I'd fall endlessly onto the ground.

Not to mention I have to run thousands of metres above the ground.

Plus, if I fall, I don't get a retry.

Oi!

Is this how it is!

Shit, shit! I really want to swear now.

I don't know who it is, but there must be someone who designed, and made this place.

I don't know if it's god or an alien.

I really want to say fuck you at his face.

Uaaah!

Leaving my anger and irritation behind, I stood on top of the tile.

The yellow tile turned instantly red the moment I stood on it.

It then began to fall.

As I had no wish to enjoy the view below the clouds, I quickly moved onto the next tile.

Standing on the next tile, I could see the clouds underneath my feet.

Just looking at it made me want to collapse in fear.

My heart was pounding with each step.

I can feel my life shortening every time.

One tile after another, they turned yellow similar to the speed I was walking.

And soon, fell after turning red.

Damn, just standing on this bridge is taking all I have.

Even as I continued through the bridge with shaking legs, the tiles began to fall faster.

What do you want me to do now!

Are you telling me to run facing against the howling winds!

Yep, that's what it meant.

As if all this was a warmup, the colour change and fall of the tiles became faster considerably.

I had no choice but to run.

[Battle focus]

I ran with the thought that my death was really, really close.

Unlike what I had originally thought, once I started to run, I could hold my balance well against the winds.

This body has gone beyond that of a normal human.

My sense of balance and reflex has reached the realm of extraordinary.

Let's run!

Uhah,

Uahahahah.

I'm going nuts here.

Is this how an addicted gambler feels when he all ins his entire fortune, or

maybe it's like pulling the trigger while playing the russian roulette.

The extreme tension and fear became destructive pleasure.

Is it because of the hormones?

Ping!

I blocked an arrow which appeared from nowhere.

Dear, god.

These shameless bastards.

They dare fire arrows in this situation.

If I didn't have a shield, I have to dodge, and if I dodge, I lose my balance.

Then I'd just end up falling.

Turning around, I could see 5 tiles between where I was and the one falling.

Alright, let's maintain this speed.

I can block arrows for days.

As I relieved myself with that thought, the bridge suddenly shook.

It began to move up and down.

There were no outside forces causing it.

The bridge itself, as if sentient with the thought of dropping me, moved.

These complete assholes.

When I see Kirikiri next time, I'll ask how I can send my swears to the god of this Tutorial.

[The God of Adventures pleads innocence]

Because of the shaking, my body flew into air for a moment.

It may have been few centimetres from the tile, but it felt like thousands of metres.

To be honest I'm already thousands of metres in the air!

As my life flashed before my eyes, my feet were back of the tile.

Thankfully, I managed to land without shaking up my balance.

Looking behind after landing, the tile before me was falling down after turning red.

Soon, the tile I was standing on was turning yellow.

Damn, I had about 5 tiles as safety net before that shaking!

I quickly raised my speed.

Whether I fall because I lose my balance, or fall because I'm too slow, it's death either way.

Pulling my speed up, I managed to get the Wind Spirit's Blessing's 2nd effect.

As I was accelerating from the buff, my body began to fly briefly after each step.

I had to be aware of how I land, trying to match the force of the wind with each landing.

Anyway I managed to hold on.

I can still somehow maintain my balance even at this speed.

It's thanks to all the growth this body had.

And I haven't used any of my blinks either.

Even if I lose my balance and fall, I can blink upwards, and get back onto the tile.

I could blink forward if I was starting to fall behind aswell.

Atleast I'm wearing a life jacket.

As long as I use my blinks wisely, I can get past this bridge and reach that peak!

I can do it!

As I keep assuring myself, I ran.

Trying not to look below as much as possible.

At some point, I was getting used to this maddening acrobatics.

As if I was getting numb to the constant fear and tension.

My hesitation for each step became fainter.

Keeping my Wind Spirit's Blessing, I continued.

It's been a while since I've maintained this speed.

Just from looking at it, it seems I'm close to the goal.

Looking back, there was some distance between me and the red tile.

It seems I won't have to worry about falling even if I drop my speed alittle here.

At that moment, I could feel small vibrations on the tile.

I've felt this vibration many tims now.

After this, the bridge shows 1 pattern.

It will shake, in order to drop me off.

From the direction of the vibration, it will shake sideways this time.

Confident in my prediction, I jump high into the air.

With the speed from the blessing and my supernatural body like that of a superhero,

jumping in the air allowed me to be airborne for many seconds.

The tiles moved left and right as expected.

If I were to stay on the tile, it's likely I would of fell unable to hold on.

Even if I did manage to stay, the tiles would have caught upto me rapidly.

Jumping in the air was what I believed to be the best solution.

That shaking doesn't last more than few seconds.

Afterwards, the tiles will arrange in a straight line like before.

And,

the landing!

Landing high in the air is greatly affected by the wind, due to it's strength.

But, I keep in mind of the direction of the wind before jumping.

I remember the experience of golfing with my father in a windy day.

But this time, I'm the golf ball.

Because of the speed, I land with a loud thud.

Since I know that the tiles don't shake or fall from large impact, I have no need to think about the force of the landing.

Soon after, I kick the tile and begin to run again.

With a whoosh, an arrow passed by.

These arrows don't simply appear out of nowhere.

All the arrows come from the objective, in a parabola.

And, with the speed I'm maintaining,

none of the arrows can reach me.

The clear, plastic sound the tiles make was turning refreshing.

I'm rather used to it now.

I'm sure that even if any more stages are on cliffs like this, I'll be fine.

I've adapted completely.

As if annoyed from that last thought I had, the Tutorial made another diabolical trial.

Some of the tiles in the bridge are missing.

Quite alot of them.

From rough look, about 30 to 40 tiles are missing in the middle.

Is this really designed to cross.

Maybe it was made to just drop all the challengers off to death.

I could feel incredible malice from it, something I couldn't feel in the ridiculous traps I've faced in the Tutorial.

You're still not falling? Even after this?

That's how it feels in this boss room, as it tries its best to make me fall.

This boss room trap is rather strange.

But, despite that fact, I am confident I can pass this boss room.

The bridge is made of tiles 2m long and wide, with 4m^2 in area.

If it wasn't for a fact that it's miles above the ground, you can move through it comfortably.

Even the constant wind had a single direction, so I got used to it fast.

And the moment I got used to it, the dangers of this boss room's trap fell considerably.

Maintaining my speed, I jump as high as I can just before the gap.

Thanks to the growth I've had, I do have ridiculous jumping

strength,

but it's not enough to jump the giant gap here.

Once I reach a suitable height,

I blink forwards,

I used blink 3 times to be exact, and landed on the tile beyond the gap.

But, I didn't prepare for the loss of momentum from the last blink I used.

My body began to be swept away by the wind.

Once more, I use the blink forward.

Losing momentum seem like a disadvantage, but it can also be an advantage.

The moment I land, I lower myself and gain balance.

It was easy enough, since the momentum I had from the wind disappeared.

After landing, I raise my head, and look forward.

The objective, the other peak was close now.

Chapter 32 - Tutorial 3rd Floor (Part 3)

[Blink]

Using the last of the 5 charges of my Blink Emblem,

I landed on the objective.

This small patch of land at the peak of the mountain seemed perilous when I first entered the boss room.

But, after crossing kilometres of an airborne bridge, which twisted and turned with determination to drop me off,

the peak felt like the safest place in the world.

Huaaah.

An exhausted sigh fill the air.

My hands and legs have been shaking the moment I finished, and my waist was going limp.

The sweet scent coming from my mouth tickled my nose.

Horrible.

The 3rd Boss Room was just horrendous.

I managed to scrape by alive, but it has altered my thoughts about the Tutorial.

Until now, I have thought the Tutorial was aimed to train the challengers, just as it's name says.

Although the difficulty is just ridiculous.

But, I could sense pure malice in this Boss Room.

I really wanted to just lie down on the floor, but I held on by by putting my palms on my knees.

I can't let my guard down yet.

The message has yet to...

[Congratulations. You have cleared the last trial of the 3rd Floor, Hell difficulty]

[You have cleared Tutorial, Hell difficulty Floor 3]

[You are healed of all injuries and status effects]

[You have received 1000 points for clearing the Floor]

[You have received 1000 points for being the first to clear the floor]

[You have cleared 2 floors in a single Round. You have received 1000 additional points]

[Many gods are pleased with your actions. You have received 5700 points]

[Many gods are displeased with your actions. 500 points are deducted]

[Additional reward is given according to your performance]

[The God of Adventures would like to gift some of his powers in place of the reward. Will you accept?]

There it is.

God of Adventures!

The bastard who would complain all the time, have finally

decided to give me something.

[The God of Adventures look at you with disdain]

No, I have always believed in the God of Adventures.

I have never thought he was useless other than sending me weird 1 line sentences!

Never have I thought he was just a stalker with no respect to personal space!

I knew that one day, he will rise into a respectable being in time.

Why would I refuse a gift given.

I take with with a word of gratitude.

Blink Emblem was an overpowered ability beyond my imaginations, and was greatly pleased with its performance.

I was hoping that I might get something like it again.

[Talaria's Wings (LvMax)]

Description: The God of Adventures has recently made this power to gift a Challenger of great interest. As it was hastily made, it lacks in certain areas.

Ah...

Ah... this man...

Is it because of the God of Slowness, that he made this in a hurry.

Even the description says this is poorly made.

Normally, I would get a message like 'The God of Adventures is flustered', but it's surprisingly quiet.

I was looking forward to his reaction to this description.

I should check it on the extra tab on my Status.

"Status."

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv.7

Strength: 19

Dexterity: 37

Vitality: 23

Mana: 27

Skills: Battle Focus Lv.7 Willpower Lv.5 Awakening Lv.1
Night Vision Lv.2 Vision Brightness Lv.1 Charge Lv.2 Natural
Healing Lv.2 Improved Senses Lv.4 Increased Field of Vision
Lv.1 Toughened Skin Lv.1 Basic Swordsmanship Lv.1 Cut Lv.1
Basic Shield Skills Lv.2 Wind Spirit's Blessings Lv.1 Mental
Corruption Immunity Lv.1 Pain Resistance Lv.11 Bleed
Resistance Lv.4 Stun Resistance Lv.2 Pierce Resistance Lv.2
Poison Resistance Lv.4 Paralysis Resistance Lv.6 Heat
Resistance Lv.4 Burn Resistance Lv.6 Cold Resistance Lv.4
Frostbite Resistance Lv.3 Blink Emblem Lv.Max Talaria's
Wings Lv.Max

Extra: The God of Slowness watches with satisfaction.

The Extra tab which showed the God of Adventure's thoughts switched to God of Slowness.

Just what is the standard for that tab.

When the God of Slowness gifted her power, it still showed a description of God of Adventures on the Extra tab.

But as soon as the God of Adventures gifts his power, it changed

to the God of Slowness.

Hm...

I feel like a landlord who just kicked out his tenant.

And he even gifted me some powers too.

Despite the fact that it is poorly made in the description, it's from a god, with Max level.

I'm sure it's going to be useful.

I should ask Kirikiri as usual for a thorough explanation.

It's too bad that I couldn't receive a new skill by conquering the boss room.

To be honest, conquering be damned, I'm just glad I managed to make out of this alive.

Uuh, Huaah.

After reading the descriptions, my body lost all its tension.

It's time to find peace in my mind.

Goodbye.

The perilous, tiny mountain peaks. The turbulent, deafening winds.

Let us never see each other again.

"Uwah! You came back so fast! Buy me a cake!"

The white rabbit, no a girl possessed with endless desire for cake, welcomed me.

The gentle winds wrap softly on my cheeks as it passes by.

With the ground covered with soft, comforting grass

The weather is perfect with ideal temperature and humidity.

The sun shines brightly, but not enough to make me squint my eyes.

This world is so perfect that it is unnatural.

I have once slept on the grass of the national park.

When I woke up, my face was red from the heat, my back was aching, while rash covered my arms and legs.

This was a perfect nap in contrast to my memories.

I have never had such a satisfactory sleep ever since, no even before I've entered the Tutorial.

It feels like all my exhaustion has disappeared.

The perfect nap deserving of all my praises and more.

Except, the one thing which woke me from my sleep. The snores from Kirikiri.

Kirikiri's snores weren't that loud.

In fact, it's very quiet.

It's just that, I can hear it clearly, because she is using my stomach as a pillow.

Actually, I probably woke up from the discomfort I felt on my stomach, not the noise.

The culprit who woke me up from my greatest nap ever, slept

with the happiest look in the world.

Was it because of the promise I made, that I will buy her a cake after the nap. She always had a bright look, but it seemed to be brimming with light this time.

But why is she using my stomach as a pillow.

The nerve she has to use someone as a pillow as.

I raise my hand and pet her ears.

It was softer than I thought.

Well, I thought it would be soft, but it was even softer than that.

I've raised dogs and a hamster before, but I've never felt anything like this.

Even just touching it seems to ease my soul.

As I pet her ear like petting a small puppy, Kirikiri screamed as she woke up.

"Kyaong!"

"Huh? Ah, sorry. Was it because I touched your ears?"

"Don't touch the inside of my ear! The noise rings inside my head!"

Um. I see your point.

"Hmph!"

Kirikiri snorted, folded her arms, and turned her head in a smooth motion.

It seems she really hates someone touching the insides of her ear.

"Are you made Kirikiri? Oh dear, and I was about to buy a cake too."

The moment I spoke the C of cake, Kirikiri twisted her head toward me.

"I'm not mad! Let's eat!"

Ofcourse.

I smile back at her, and open the shop.

"Kirikiri. Isn't the last trial for 3rd floor a little weird? The difficulty as well. The theme and method seemed to be different from the rest. Is that also an error during construction?"

She raised her head to reply, which was smeared all over with chocolate.

Atleast breathe while you're eating.

"Ah, that. That's just an illusionary trap."

Huh?

A trap?

Sorry?

I suddenly feel the tilt coming from my head.

"Should I explain more? You've cleared it already you know."

"Yes. If you don't tell me now, I just might get angry."

"It's a type of illusionary trial. Create an environment which forces you to fall off, and when you fall the illusion disappears, with all the traps that were prepared before triggers consecutively."

An environment which makes you fall.

If my growth was even slightly less, or didn't receive the Blink Emblem, I would most definitely have fallen off.

And as soon as I do, a trap hell filled with arrows would of started.

I realised that it is similar to the black and white stone trap in the 3rd floor.

Show an obvious solution at start, deny it and force the challenger into the trap.

It was a trap which required concentration, composure and thoroughness to doubt all they see from the challengers.

"I'm sure none of the gods would of guessed that a challenger would clear it without falling in the 2nd Round, heh."

I understand now.

But it still pisses me off.

I thought I was going to die this time aswell!

Damn it.

I ask another question, as if grasping for straws.

"Kirikiri. If the person who designed the tutorial exists, I would like to send some insults to him. Is there a way?"

"Nope."

Ofcourse not.

I wanted to ask for better descriptions on my new skill, and some recommendations on items which will help in clearing the 4th Floor, but Kirikiri went back to shoving her head onto the plate and eating the cake.

I'll ask once she's done.

Personally, I liked the cream cake more than the chocolate one.

I should buy a white cream cake topped generously with fruit.

And, well, I think Kirikiri looks better with white cream instead of brown chocolate on her face.

"Community."

I decided to browse through the Community while I wait for Kirikiri.

Now, is there any new informations out?

Most of the threads are patterns and walkthroughs on how to be easy and normal difficulty traps.

That's the advantage of numbers.

More information can be processed, analysed and answered.

Hard difficulty was a little slower.

The highest rankers were on the start of Floor 2, or just reached the halfway to the floor.

Casualties were similar to Hell aswell.

Ofcourse, Hell difficulty had much fewer people in the first place, and since everyone died except me, it's a little difficult to compare between the two.

It seems they are having a bad time.

Not as much as me though.

it was hard to find any information worth while for me.

As I continue to browse with disappointment, I've found some strange comments.

[Kim Sang Sik, Floor 4: Those Representatives. Are they really alright? Can we really leave them like that?]

[Lee Gee Jun, Floor 3: I know it leaves a bad taste, but what can we do. We have no proof as to what they are doing. We can't even intervene on it aswell. What can we do to those who don't even come out of Waiting Room. Not like we can go down Floors either]

[Lee Myoung Sun, Floor 2: They sent me a message too, but I just ignored it. I should of accepted and atleast find out what they are even upto]

It was a short conversation.

It seems, the chat room conversation was leaked into the threads momentarily.

I can't find earlier or later threads about it.

Representative Confederation.

Since I've received their invitation aswell, it felt wrong to leave everything as it is.

Representative Confederation.

Just saying it's name felt like it was leaving a bad taste.

Let's clear things up.

Representative Confederation.

What are they representing.

Just by looking at the earlier threads and their accounts, it doesn't seem to involve the higher rankers of the Tutorial.

My previous prediction that it was a meeting for high rankers in the Tutorial was a miss.

Just what, who can you represent.

I began to think Community as a group.

Since the only way I can communicate with others is through Community.

But, with Hell excluded, most people gather in Waiting Rooms, not Community.

An isolated, unnatural environment far from reality is the Tutorial's Waiting Room.

It's not just a bad taste now.

Among the comments, the phrase 'What can we do to those who don't even come out of Waiting Room.' gets me the most.

Once they enter the Tutorial, after the first Round, All meat jerkies and water which were provided for free disappears.

Afterwards, they have to use points to buy food.

Infact, after 24 hours of staying in the Waiting Room, they are kicked out of it.

Since I heard it from Kirikiri after the 1st Round, this information holds true.

If you were to make a confederation out of everyone in the Waiting Room.

How can you maintain the confederation without leaving the Waiting Room.

How will that confederation manage itself.

No matter how I think about it, it can't be normal.

Damn.

All the joy I felt from clearing the 3rd floor plummeted down to depression.

Just as that comment says, outsiders cannot find out, nor intervene with what is happening inside.

What do I do?

Chapter 33 - Tutorial 4th Floor, Waiting Room

I've decided to ignore the Representative Confederation for now.

I'm sure I can ask Kirikiri about the Waiting Room where the Representatives resided at, just like how I could ask what happened to the people in Hell 1st Floor.

But, it would most likely cost all the Chances I've gained from clearing the 3rd Floor.

And most importantly was the fact that I couldn't intervene with what they were doing, even if I knew what the situation was.

It may sound like a cheap excuse, actually it was an excuse, but I'll just focus on myself for now.

"Kirikiri."

I could see a surprised look on Kirikiri's face.

On her hand was chocolate topping from the the cake.

"You can eat it."

"Ok!"

I started talking about the main issue after watching Kirikiri finish the chocolate topping.

"Can you give a detailed description for Talaria's Wings?"

"Yep! You'll see it when you get back to the Waiting Room."

"Um... and, Kirikiri. I still have multiple Chances to ask questions left over right?"

"Yep."

"Then, can I leave it for now, and use it later?"

"Yep. That's fine."

That's a relief.

I planned on asking about either the Gods, or how one would go about clearing the Tutorial in general the next time I see her.

With that decision made, I asked for assistance in buying necessary items for the next stage.

Kirikiri didn't ask for any payment just like back in the 1st Floor.

Using the saved up points, I bought a better leather armour and more potions.

As well as a few miscellaneous items and equipments as recommended by Kirikiri.

Hm... Kirikiri's recommendations have been somewhat unexpected.

I could somewhat guess the theme of the 4th Floor was.

But, I couldn't figure out what the main purpose of these items were.

I guess the rope, hook and binoculars were obvious but,

A mirror?

What on earth would I use this for?

I keep that question in my head, afraid of using my Chances by asking that question.

I looked into the mirror.

But instead of seeing my reflection, it showed a strange mark on my face.

On my forehead to be accurate!

What is this.

"What the hell is this!"

"It's the symbol of the Blink Emblem. I'll answer that for free this time. Heh."

There was a blue, circular magic seal seared on my forehead...

I wouldn't want this, even if I went back to being a teenager (chyuuninbyou).

And it was even glowing slightly!

Had it been on my forehead the whole time since I got the skill?

For the first time, I was somewhat happy of the fact that I didn't have to worry about meeting anyone in Hell difficulty.

It's too embarrassing to see anyone with a doodle on their face.

I sighed and stepped into the portal.

"I'll see you later. I'm off."

Kirikiri did her usual reply to my farewell, by hopping about around me.

I was expecting Kirikiri to ask for another cake when I returned, but what came out from her was different.

"I'll tell this as bonus for buying me a cake. There's going to be a Day of great harmony opening soon."

Day of great harmony?

I was swallowed by the portal's light before I could ask what it meant, and was teleported to the 4th Floor Waiting Room.

[Welcome to Floor 4 Waiting Room]

A Day of great harmony.

I checked the Community to see if anyone else had information, but none could be found.

If this Day of great harmony could gather all the people in the Tutorial onto the same environment,

I just might be able to contact the Representatives directly.

Maybe not.

Well, I should be prepared for it just in case.

How should I act in that situation.

After clearing my thoughts for a brief moment, I invited some of the people I've been following in the Community to a chat room.

[Round 2, Day 25. 20:30]

[Talaria's Wings (Lv.Max)]

Description: The God of Adventures has recently made this power to gift a Challenger of great interest. As it was hastily made, it lacks in certain areas.

The God of Adventures could not stand the anxiousness any further, and created this skill using his powers.

When cast, it summons Talaria's Wings behind the caster.

Talaria's Wings allowed the caster to glide in the air.

Both wings have incredibly high magic defence.

When cast, the Wings use the powers of the creator, God of Adventures, and it does not require divine powers, concentration or mana from the caster.

It's a good skill as expected.

It's rather disappointing that the skill doesn't allow me to fly, and instead allow gliding.

But, if I use Blink to travel up, the gliding should come in handy.

The Tutorial's stages are mostly confined, narrow corridors, but according to the Community, the stages' size and height increase with each floor.

It's easy to realise how effective this skill was, just by imagining if I had this back in 3rd Floor.

The Boss Room would have posed no threat, as I would of used the gliding skill to pass through the trial harmlessly.

It's limited to gliding, but having the sky as possible areas of movement was definitely a good news.

And the magic defense.

If you asked what is the greatest weakness of a warrior, it's magic attack.

Just having the magic defence from it will be of use.

I decided to try it out at this point.

"Talaria's Wings."

Oh wow.

A pair of large, very large wings appeared behind my back.

About 3m each.

It's about 6m wide if I spread them out fully.

It's starting to make my heart pound.

It feels like its tugging at my primal instinct as a male.

A point to note was that they aren't connected to my back.

I was slightly worried how they could possibly fuse with my muscles or bone, or rip through my clothes.

The wings were floating in the air, about half a foot away.

That's interesting.

And it seemed like it's made of blue crystal, not feather.

Actually, it could be a type of gem, not just a crystal.

When I look at it, it feels like it's drawing me into the wings.

I test out the wings by moving them around.

Despite floating in mid air away from me, and being made of crystal instead of feather, the wings slowly moved as I had wished.

Since the wings were so much larger than me, I could hide my entire body with the wings.

I think they would make a great defence against magic.

I doubt it's effective against psychological attacks, but my Mental Corruption Immunity skill will take care of that.

The tips were quite sharp, so it seemed possible to use them for close quarter combat.

But, one sad part was no matter how much I tried flapping those wings, I could not fly.

It really can only glide.

I was considering if I had to start working on 4th Floor before the 3rd Round finished, but researching would take its place now.

I need to use the time to get used to Talaria's Wings and Blink, and how to use them in combination.

It's very nice to have something different to work on, since I haven't made any significant growth in the 3rd Floor.

Of course, I can't forget my usual pain, bleed, pierce and burn resistance grinding.

These busy days continue, just as it always had.

"Big Sis. Stop it. They'll find out"

I calm my little sister with my eyes.

Well, I doubt she was calm, but I wished she would atleast stay quiet.

Inventory.

We stick close to the corner of the Waiting Room and take a few jerkies out, little by little.

I can't take too much out.

If those sons of bitches found out, they would take the jerkies right on the spot.

The usual beating for opening the Inventory in secret, without permission would follow as well.

I shoved as many pieces of jerky as I could into my shirt.

There was definitely a limit to how long we can stay in the Waiting Room.

The holograph message was showing the remaining time left, and the conversation from the bastards confirm it as well.

24 hours.

It's unlikely I'll die, but it's too long to withstand without a single drop of water or food.

I might be fine, but my little sister may not make it.

After taking out enough jerkies, I close the inventory, and close the buttons on my shirt.

This still isn't enough.

Surviving was possible.

Those demons may beat the hell out of someone, but they aren't psychopathic killers.

For food, I could sneak some jerkies from my shirt.

However, the most crucial fault was that I have no means to protect myself, or my sister from them.

That group of mobsters who introduced themselves as the 1st Round seniors had strength beyond logic.

Anyone who fought against them was beaten close to death.

The fight was our 7 against their 3.

We weren't even a match.

All of use raised our weapons and fought, but couldn't even scratch one of them.

The difference is that they are from the 1st Round, while we are 2nd.

They may have been normal people just like us, back in the days.

The, the process of going through the Tutorial may have given them the super human strength.

That may explain why they are surrounding the blue magic circle, and stop everyone from going outside.

I instinctively looked at my stolen weapons.

I shouldn't have lost my spears so easily.

I thought back to the time where I first got that spear.

Tutorial.

Starting weapon.

Dimensional teleport.

Inventory.

Status.

All these illogical sights.

It's easier to think that I was in a game world rather than a real one.

That would explain this situation better as well.

The floating holograph message was similar to that from games.

Maybe, this really was a game world, and I've become a character in it.

The only problem was, that this game was incredibly unfriendly.

It's not telling me all the crucial information that a normal game would usually provide.

I needed information.

Where we are, and what this world was.

What happens after 24 hours, when we are kicked out from the Waiting Room.

If there was anything to protect ourselves from them.

How do we gain strength like them.

I needed information.

Hm hm. Ptueh!

I forced spit from my throat.

Someone got hit by it, but there were no complaints coming.

In fact, the person was shaking, trying to avoid eye contact as much as possible.

Those gutless weaklings.

I chew at the jerkies in my pocket.

It's been a while since I've had food other than jerky.

What am I, an Old Boy?

It's making me go crazy.

But, despite my complaints of my meals, I am satisfied at this situation.

Very, very satisfied.

"Boss Chang Suk."

My sharp underling bring out a waterbottle for me.

Of course, both the jerky and the water aren't mine.

All my jerkies and water disappeared when the 1st Round finished.

Of course, I didn't buy new ones either.

I remember the 1st Round.

When after reaching the Healing Fountain, how scared and vulnerable I felt, standing in front of what the Community call the Boss Room.

I paced around the stone doors, and ended the 1st Round that way.

[1st Round has finished]

[You have failed clearing the 1st Floor]

[Bonus rewards are given according to your play]

[You have received 250 points]

I was relieved when I was returned to the Waiting Room.

I wasn't the only one failing the 1st Floor.

There was a delinquent looking high schooler from the same Waiting Room as me,

and some slacker from a different Waiting Room.

3 in total.

And soon, the 2nd Round started.

As the new people entered, I realised how identical they are to how I was in the 1st Round.

Scared, and vulnerable.

A world which cannot be understood logically, and no one would explain the rules for you.

They were normal people.

And weak.

At that moment, I thought up an idea.

This must be how Socrates felt when he shouted "Eureka!".

As I scanned the Waiting Room with a satisfied look, I found out a girl was looking at the Community in a corner.

"Oi, you bitch! How dare you read that without permission! Oi! Bring her over."

There were always idiots who don't know where they belonged.

The girl screamed about, but my minion pulled her by the hair.

She said she's a uni student. Time to show them an example.

For a brief moment, I'm the king of this small world.

King? King... A new idea came to me.

My seat of power would be temporary due to the limit of this system.

And I thought an idea to prolong my seat of power.

First, I needed to expand my group beyond this Waiting Room.

For its name... yeah.

The Representative Confederation.

Chapter 34 - Tutorial 60th Floor (Part 4)

"As time goes by, even if we forget, this heartaching feeling of longing, please don't forget~"

During my usual solo singing session,

a cup of coffee spawned with a clack, as if it was pleading for me to stop.

It's got to be an Americano when you're reading a newspaper in a cafe.

I took a sip of my Americano and began to read the newspaper.

The Monthly Normal Newspaper.

The sole Press company in the Korean Tutorial, founded by the Floor 30 NPCs in the Normal Difficulty.

Their naming sense was horrible.

Ever since its founding up till now, there had been many requests for a name change. However, it was ignored and they continued to use their name using a feeble excuse that the title contains the mind and soul of the founder.

You can subscribe to them by donating a certain amount of

points every month through the Auction House.

For my case, I'm not just a subscriber, but one of their greatest investor at this point.

The monthly newspaper was created with 3 sections.

First was the news regarding what was happening outside the Tutorial, the real world.

Truth be told, it contained the least amount of useful information to the Players, but the outside news has always had the greatest attention from them.

The same goes for me.

Ever since I got trapped on this 60th Floor, reading the newspaper and finding out what happened outside this place had become my greatest joy.

What were the headlines for this month?

[Competition between America and Russia for the Returned]

[Repeat of the Space Race? Endless race for the Hell Difficulty]

[Lack of Korean Government's involvement on Hell Difficulty]

[America encourages future Players to challenge Hell Difficulty further]

Those crazy bastards.

They should know better than to encourage people to come here.

There was no way I couldn't swear at them.

Back in the past when it came to Hell Difficulty, China was first, and Russia was second.

In those days the number of people in Hell was just a tally on how many greedy people joined in.

But ever since the Hard Difficulty Players cleared the Tutorial and returned, everything changed.

Each and every individual who cleared Hard Difficulty had, with exaggeration, the power of an entire nation.

National might was now directly related to how many Returned that nation had.

The World's Policy was first the Returned, and second the Returned as well.

The most valuable resource was the Returned.

A nation's public order and military strength was based on the Returned.

The stability of the economy relied on the Returned.

Population and its density was about the Returned.

All first world nations gained information about the Tutorial from the graduates, the Returned.

In order to prepare the population from the random nature of the Tutorial's selection, they made its education and preparation an obligation to every citizen.

Plus, they began attracting the Returned from Third World countries by sending better contracts and deals.

Soon after, many of the Returned chose not to help their own countries, but choose their nationalities based on the contracts they were given.

There's even a saying that the moment you enter the Tutorial, you lose your passport.

Even if one accepted a contract with their own nation, in order to

improve their terms, they would treat themselves as nationless before negotiating the contract.

All of the world scoured through the lands to gather as much Hard difficulty Returned as possible.

And soon, their eyes turned to Hell.

The first to move was China.

They would promote the relatives of all who challenged Hell Difficulty as Heroes.

From the rumours, half of the newcomers entered Hell Difficulty at one point.

The result was catastrophic.

They lacked too much information.

All of the challengers in Hell were killed through multiple Rounds, and China was now behind in raising new Returned from the world.

Since the number of Challengers are not determined by the nation's population, the blow was even heavier for the large, heavily populated nation.

The fact that only 100 people were chosen every time was very favourable to a country with small population.

And one of those countries was Korea.

For some reason, the survival rate of Korea's Returned were high.

Plus, Korea also had the highest Ranker for Hell, me.

Korea suddenly became one of the strongest nation for the Returned.

America soon approached Korea.

They determined that the reason for Korea's success was due to the society within the Tutorial and the high ranking Players who lead that society.

America promised financial and military support and in return, received information about Tutorial including Hell Difficulty.

To be precise, from me and few others, through the Korean Government.

And soon, America made every challenger in Hell as America's Heroes.

They made their lives into a documentary, and encouraged them.

They made them into idols for children, and created toys based on them.

With that, America now has an astonishing number of 11 challengers, I mean survivors in Hell Difficulty.

What was the point of having so many?

What was the point of reaching the 30th Floor?

Their chance of leaving the Tutorial alive was ever so close to 0.

Idiots.

The Korean Government listened to my warnings too well.

They made entering Hell difficulty illegal.

... But wasn't that too much?

Well it's good that there were no more casualties resulting from it...

Thanks to that law, people only enter Hell by accident like Lee Yeon Hee, or fools who wouldn't listen to the warnings from

others.

Back then I didn't think I'd get stuck on the 60th Floor.

Although I'm sure noone would of made it upto 60th Floor even if Korea made it legal.

Hm... but it still put me on a spot.

Maybe I should of made the warning lighter.

I closed the first section of the newspaper, and opened the second.

News within the Tutorial.

[More Controversies regarding extreme punishment from the Militia.]

[Park Jung Ah, Captain of the Militia, informs punishments will stay harsh as it is.]

[Lee Jun Suk, Hard Difficulty Floor 90. When will he final clear the Floor?]

In all honesty, I'm not so interested in the news within the Tutorial itself.

Since all these stories could be seen within the Tutorial or heard from others.

The main article for the 2nd section was the walkthrough for the Tutorial.

And I could speak with certainty.

This newspaper had nothing that could aid me.

But, I always looked through the newspaper in detail, hoping to find some information that would be able to help Lee Yeon Hee.

Of course, there was none.

Valuable information that I didn't know of and ones that could help me wouldn't be written on an article like this for free.

That was dead certain.

I clicked my tongue, and took a look at the last section, the Auction House catalogue.

I wondered if there was anything good that month.

Could I send something to help Lee Yeon Hee?

As soon as I opened it, there was a headline which caught my eye.

[Finally Released! The Dragon's Egg!]

It seems Kim Yeon Ooh from Hard Difficulty Floor 77 has failed to hatch the dragon egg.

Through the constant requests from the Auction House, Kim Yeon Ooh has decided to list it for an auction on the 83rd Round.

Dragon...

Dragon's egg...

Hey, wait a minute.

Normally dragons are at the pinnacle of magic,

and they liked to transform into humans through polymorph and, huh?

"Hallelujah!"

I finally saw an exit through the 61st Floor!

I hatch the egg!

I raise the hatchling!

I teach magic to the hatchling!

I teach polymorph!

I train it to a point where it can survive alone in 61st Floor!

61st Floor Cleared!

I calmed my pounding heart, and checked how many remaining points I had.

Alright, I am fully loaded.

But not satisfied, I made a statement in the Community.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60: Anyone who bets on the dragon egg will get fucked over by me.]

[Lee Jun Suk, Floor 90: Wow, you've finally lost it huh. Jung Ah nuna, member of the Militia is blackmailing here. Isn't that a problem?]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60: Shut up. And don't you dare think about

making a bet for the dragon egg either.]

[Lee Jun Suk, Floor 90: Heh. That's up for me to decide.]

[Park Jung Ah, Floor 90:... Sigh]

[Kim Min Hyuk, Floor 97: Man, he's changed a lot. Back in the days, you couldn't even talk properly with others, trying to set that mood with your chuuninbyou. What happened to you?]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60: Pot calling the kettle black huh. You couldn't even look me in the eye back then because you were so scared.]

[Kim Min Hyuk, Floor 97: Oi! Don't say that bullshit. I wasn't scared aight? I wasn't at all.]

I ignored my friend's attempt at maintaining his reputation and closed the Community.

Unlike what I've said on the Tutorial, I won't be chasing down people who competed for the dragon egg.

I have my place as a member of the militia to worry about.

Besides, I would never lose to anyone in the auction when it comes to points.

First of all, I'm the highest ranking player in Hell Difficulty.

Secondly, I've been here ever since the very first round, and I've been taking all the special benefits including the first to clear the floors 1 to 60 and many more.

I've earned some hefty points through providing information and counseling walkthroughs and helping with raising the stats for others.

There was no one in the Tutorial throughout the world, who had more points than me.

I could probably buy not just an egg but a dragon itself, if it ever came up in the auction house.

And the reality was that I would never be able to beat someone without going back to reality.

Unless the Day of great harmony occurred again.

In fact, it's been a while since the last Day of great harmony.

It had always been very irregular with its arrangement and the frequency dropped as time went by, but maybe it was time for another one to be arranged soon.

If it does happen, I'll be able to see my friends and most

importantly, see Lee Yeon Hee for the first time.

I had been talking with her through the chat this whole time, I wanted to know who she was in real life by seeing her eye to eye.

Maybe it would help me with training plans for her.

I should definitely put a request amongst the Easy difficulty players to gather some information about the next Day of great harmony.

Memories of the past Day of great harmonys began to pop up.

There's... not many good memories about the first Day of great harmony.

There were other memories from different conferences as well.

Some were good, and some weren't so good.

These conferences were arranged quite frequently before the rules within the Community were set in place.

According to Park Jung Ah, it felt like the gods were urging us to solve the situation at hand.

Geez.

They should have planned the system better when they made it.

Since none of them could engage directly to solve it, they had no other choice than to open these conferences until the problems were solved by the people themselves.

After I read the newspaper, I left it at the corner of the table and took out a letter.

It was a letter to Lee Yeon Hee.

Truth was I've been having a 1:1 chat with her everyday, but I occasionally send these letters aswell.

The first letter I sent was through the Auction House which was how I sent her items, and have continued to do so up until now.

It was okay for me, since all I had was time.

For Lee Yeon Hee, well...

Maybe it felt like being pen pals for her?

Well, it wasn't so bad.

If this could ease her loneliness and boredom then I've got to go

along with it as much as I could.

Lee Yeon Hee had been sending all the thoughts and feelings she's been having as if writing a diary.

I noticed most of her conversations have been centred on her current personal state and complaints rather than information and training.

The letters focused more on stories back in the real world or when she was young.

Since the letters were quite long, the replies had to become thorough aswell.

I proofread the letter, looking for mistakes or if I'm missing any points in my answers.

After the proofreading the letter, I pondered on my concerns that I've delayed until now.

It had been going on since the night before.

Should I really put this onto the letter?

I repeatedly wrote it, erased it, and changed it.

Even a teenage boy in love wouldn't worry as much over the last phrase of his letter.

Haah.

Send Kirikiri Turtle's,

I don't think it's the time yet.

Send Kirikiri my regards.

Yes. Let's just keep it this way.

I really do want to send my regards to Kirikiri aswell.

My mind felt refreshed after dealing with the concerns I've had on my mind for the last few days.

Chapter 35 - Tutorial 4th Floor

[I thought I was going to die! I was really about to die!]

[Didn't I tell you not to fall off? So why did you go and do the exact opposite?]

[How can you not fall off!]

[I didn't fall off!]

[faipfebsdbs;bsd]

[Enough. The results from the 4th floor will tell us exactly.]

[Tell us what?]

[How far up you can climb in this place]

[Round 2, Day 29. 8:30]

It was ideal for me to focus these last few days on my growth and training.

Thanks to that, I've become accustomed to using Blink.

It was still difficult to use as an attack, but adequate for the purpose of closing a gap closing or escaping.

Using the Talaria's Wings skill freely however was still troublesome.

At least I was able to fly in the sky by using the Glide skill instead of having to flap those wings constantly to fly.

One more thing to note was that none of my resistance skills have improved.

It seems their levels have become too high for the grinding in the Waiting Room to have an effect.

And, with only a short amount of time left for the 2nd Round to finish, I thought of challenging the 4th Floor to test out the newly skills - Blink and Talaria's Wings.

Clearing the floor would be difficult considering the time, so it would mainly be reconnaissance of the beginning area.

[Will you enter the 4th Floor?]

Yeap.

A bright light surrounded my body, with a familiar echoing of the portal.

[Welcome to Tutorial Stage, Hell Difficulty Floor 4]

I quickly scanned the area as I entered the floor.

It had the usual polished stone corridor.

The only difference was that, the corridor had gotten much wider.

It was about 10m wide.

As for the height... forget it.

It was too dark, and there was not a single object I could use to estimate the height.

Just looking up wasn't enough to give an accurate measure.

I guessed it was probably about the same as the ceiling of Incheon airport.

Anyway, the fact that the corridor had become larger was lucky for me.

Good luck for [Ho Jae](#). Hahaha

(TL note: original is pronounced Ho Jae (which means good luck) for Ho Jae. It's a bad pun)

I begin to take out the equipments from the Inventory that I had bought with Kirikiri's advice.

I wore a new leather chest armour instead of the old one that I'd been using.

It was a shiny, black leather armour; I had no clue as to where that leather had come from.

Afterwards I wore a pair of leather pants, boots, gloves and a belt.

They were all dyed in black making a set.

It had been quite costly to buy all the equipments in black leather as they were uncommon.

If it hadn't been for the Gods and their extra points, making a set would have been difficult.

Of course, there was no bonus for buying them in the same colour.

It just looked cool.

On the belt was a throwing dagger as advised by Kirikiri.

Its effectiveness would drop in midrange, but it would be useful to create an opening..

I could still use it as a sidearm in case I lost my sword.

I could somewhat guess what the theme of 4th Floor was based on Kirikiri's advice to bring a throwing weapon.

It meant that there was probably a target that I must hit out of range.

This time, I may need to fight monsters in combat instead of using the usual machinated traps.

Based on the info from the Community,

On Easy Difficulty mode, the first monster was a walking mushroom man.

In the Normal mode, a goblin.

Information about the type of monster in the Hard mode had yet to come.

[Kuwaaaaaaaa]

I heard a sharp warcry from further ahead.

I guess a monster was coming out.

As the tension was building up, I firmly held onto my sword and shield and checked my equipment again.

With everything in place, I marched towards where the warcry had come from.

It was a typical green skinned monster that you'd see in cartoons or novels.

His skin was an unusual green.

His body jam packed with muscle, comparable to that of an Olympic wrestling gold medalist.

Giant fangs.

Red eyes.

Height of 2m.

Why was this guy my first opponent?

Damn, I could actually tell how different Hell was from other modes of difficulty just by looking at the monster instead of the traps.

The goblin from Normal Difficulty was short - around 100cm in height.

He was also unarmed.

The tip was to use the long reach of the weapon and fight from a distance.

But the monster in front of me was fully equipped.

In steel.

He looked less like a monster and more like a medieval knight.

His helmet, chest armour and boots were all made out of solid steel.

Only his arms and thighs were exposed.

In his hand was a giant axe.

I couldn't even imagine how much it would weigh.

It was a vicious axe, one I probably could lift even with two hands, let alone swing.

And he was holding it with one hand.

At least the handle of the axe was short.

It would have been a dire situation if he had a long weapon along with long arms.

Haah, what to do?

The monster stood in the same spot, staring, as if he was taunting me to attack.

Was I supposed to charge into him?

I glimpsed at the gladius in my right hand.

It was too short.

This sword had done its role sufficiently well until now.

Mainly for self harm.

But, at this moment, I wished that I had chosen a long weapon like a spear instead of such a short one.

Even a longsword would have be much better.

What the hell do I do now?

Let's think positively.

Kirikiri had not advised me to switch my weapon.

Instead what she had recommended was to wear armour and have a sidearm.

That meant this weapon was enough for me to beat this monster.

A wooden round shield and a gladius.

To deal with the difference in reach, I would have to jump towards the monster to get in close range like an infighter.

Me?

Against that?

Closing the distance wasn't hard thanks to Blink.

The problem was afterwards.

Hm, let's try blocking his attack for now.

My main weapon was the shield, not the sword.

I blocked and parried the attacks, and I stabbed whenever there was an opening, slowly wounding him to victory.

A perfect game plan, in theory.

I slowly walked forward, encouraging myself with each step.

Then suddenly, the monster charged forward as it shouted.

[Battle Focus]

Instead of retreating, I lunged towards and stabbed at the monster's neck.

Before the sword was able to reach its target, the monster swung its left arm.

[Blink]

I used the Blink skill to move backwards and create distance.

I had previously lunged so aggressively because I have Blink.

The monster didn't even act surprised by my Blink and began closing the distance without any hesitation.

The monster swung its axe, making a menacing sound.

With the momentum it had, a poor block could result in the loss of my arm let alone the shield.

Clash

I had somehow managed to parry the strike.

It sounded as if the shield was going to break, but it still held on quite well.

An ache spread from my wrist to the shoulder.

I held my sword in reverse grip and stabbed into the monster's neck.

Although it was aimed at the neck,

whether it was because of the height or because I had just missed, the strike instead landed between the neck and the shoulder.

And,

The sword wouldn't come out.

Bang!

I managed to block the fist from the monster's left arm, but the shield struck me in the face.

I gave up on the sword and used the Blink skill to go backwards and make a gap again.

Damn, was it possible for a sword to get stuck in pure muscle like that?

The monster didn't seem to be bothered by the sword in his shoulder and continued attacking.

I succeed again on parrying his axe with my shield.

The monster stepped forward and began to swing his axe the same way as he had before.

Then suddenly he changed his motion, lowering his stance and tackling with his shoulder.

Even though I was watching him do so, I wasn't able to respond to his movement.

As I was forming my stance to parry the strike coming above me, someone tackled me from below, flinging me into the air, despite having managed to block it.

I used my Blink skill to move backwards once more.

For someone who had such a reach and height advantage to lunge into the fight like that...

Heavy pain surged up from my stomach, along with its contents and blood.

As I tried to recover, I stared back at the monster,

he snorted and glanced at me with an arrogant look, then he made a gesture with his hand, asking me to attack first.

Ah, is that so.

He had been playing with me the whole time.

I didn't think there would be so much gap in our skill.

Let's think about this.

I was above him in terms of speed.

Even excluding the Blink skill, I was still much faster.

But for it to have ended up like this, it was definitely due to the difference in skill.

Even in terms of strength, there wasn't so much difference.

I could say that with certainty, since I've experienced it myself during the self harm sessions.

It was just the difference in weapons and my lack of proficiency with my weapon.

It seemed he was not actively trying to kill me by making the first move.

He was acting as if he was playing, no, teaching a new recruit as

an experienced instructor.

However, he was a guardian who had the role to stop me from going past him.

Should I run?

My left arm which had been blocking until now wasn't normal.

The impact from the tackle was still there as well.

If I used my Blink skill, no, even without it, I would be able to reach the Waiting Room.

I could improve my skill by repeatedly challenging him again and again.

I might have gotten wrecked by him now, but this situation won't last forever. I'm sure.

If I survived and healed in the Waiting Room, I would always try again at another time.

My thoughts were clear, but my legs wouldn't move.

It hurt my pride too much to retreat from this.

No, I'm just angry at this point.

I controlled my breathing and lowered my stance.

I stuck my weakened left arm close to my body and formed a guard.

The monster looked at me with interest at first, before making a stance himself with the axe on the front, realising that I was up to something.

That was not the stance you need.

Weren't you overestimating your long arms there.

I tensed up my body and used Blink.

Forward.

Not in front of the monster, but beyond where he was standing.

This was my special attack - Tackle.

Bang!

With a noise similar to a cannonball hitting a wall, I lost my consciousness.

Auaah.

I think I hit my head again.

Damn, where is this.

I couldn't see at all.

It felt like I was having a hangover.

The world spun around me.

I tried to force my arms and legs to move, but they wouldn't move as I had wished.

Soon, I realised I was on the floor.

Despite my effort, it hadn't easy to even sit up.

Some time had passed until my sights slowly came back to me.

Among the still shaky vision, I could see the monster.

He was also lying on the floor, unable to move his arms and legs.

But, his red eyes were looking directly at me.

It was as if both sides got hit by the KO punch in a match.

Whoever stood first would win.

I clenched my teeth, trying to get myself together, but ended up falling instead.

[Battle Focus]

With the accelerated thought process, I checked the state of my muscles one by one.

None of them seemed okay.

My left arm, which was the centre of the impact, was beyond salvageable.

Let's not rush here.

That monster can't stand too.

If I fell because of rushing, it would take that much longer to stand again.

Let's be calm and slow.

I pulled my hips back, making the cat stance from yoga.

I supported the weight with my right arm and my knees.

Could I stand from here?

Trying to endure the dizziness while forcing my limbs to move was difficult.

It wasn't so much the pain, but a problem with concentration.

UUh, Uaaaah!

I was standing now. Bastard.

I almost fell over again, but managed to at least get on my feet in a stagger using my right arm.

My head was still spinning, and my vision was shaking.

The body was in a constant seizure.

I could feel an uncomfortable feeling knocking at the roof of my

mouth.

Did you know?

I was used to this situation.

I was very experienced with this situation.

"This was the power of pain and stun resistance. You son of a bitch!!"

Shouting needlessly had caused my eyes to roll over again.

Shit.

You are fucked,

the moment my balance recovered so the I can walk.

I put my hand on my knees and stared at the monster who still twitching his arms and legs with the sword stuck in his shoulder.

I ended up puking over the body of the monster.

Forcing myself to move and trying to swing a sword to kill the

monster had made the situation much worse.

Since the skin and muscle of that monster was much thicker than I had thought, I had to stab repeatedly for a long time before I was able to kill him.

There was blood all over the surroundings and on my body.

Normally it would have been my blood, but this time it was someone else's.

Whether I could call a monster someone could wait until later.

I couldn't even kill a rat or an insect back in the day,

but now I was able to kill a living being, even if it was a monster - by stabbing multiple times like a deranged killer.

But, I didn't feel anything.

Was it because my mind had changed as my body became more and more inhuman?

Or had I lost something inside me?

Had I just become used to death and blood?

I would never find out the reason.

I collapsed onto the floor, just barely sitting.

Using a potion at this stage seemed unnecessary, so I decided to rest and move later.

As I was about to rest, the monster's body became see-through, then eventually disappeared.

In place of the corpse was a stone.

What's this?

A drop?

[Goblin Graktus's Birthstone]

Description: A stone gifted to the Blood Eye Tribe's meanest instructor Graktus by the tribe's shaman at birth. You can sell this in the shop.

I'm sorry.

That huge monster just now was a goblin?

Chapter 36 - Tutorial 4th Floor (2)

[Round 2, Day 30. 11:30]

"Huah"

I let out a sigh as I watched the goblin instructor's body fade away.

The birthstone had not dropped this time either.

Initially, I had been pushed back hard and had only barely managed to win with my special Blink Tackle. Now, I could beat him easily.

What I lacked in that first fight was combat knowledge and experience.

In terms of physical attributes, I had been leagues ahead of the goblin instructor.

With all the resistances and god's powers that I had, losing would be quite an achievement in itself.

Since the first battle, I had managed to defeat the goblin instructor multiple times, but there was still so many things I

could learn from his stance, his movement and his counter attacks.

Therefore, I had been continuously challenging him without moving forward to get experience.

Taking into mind the many factors such as the goblin's height and weapon, simply copying the goblin wouldn't be a good idea.

But, for someone who lacked even the basics, just observing his movements was very informative.

My old memories from practicing Judo and Kendo were slowly coming back as well.

I was starting to realize the importance of education.

The Goblin had not have any insane over the top attacks like in a fantasy book; he simply efficiently moved and attacked based on what he had learned from experience.

Although we couldn't speak to each other and the goblin would just charge at me, even so he had taught me so much.

I could certainly hit exponential growth, if there was someone who could teach me proper fighting techniques.

I should ask Kirikiri if such chances were available.

From challenging the Goblin, there had also been progress on skills.

[You have received Basic Shield Skill Lv.3]

[Cut Lv.1 has been incorporated into Basic Swordsmanship Lv.2]

[You have received Basic Swordsmanship Lv.3]

It was really encouraging to see the swordsmanship and shield skill, which I had been stuck at for so long, finally level up.

Plus, the Cut skill had also been absorbed into the Basic Swordsmanship skill.

I had pondered for quite some time what that meant.

In the end, I came to conclusion that my 'Cut' skill wasn't considered swordsmanship.

Rather than actually cutting something, it had been focused on hitting away arrows.

I'm not certain, but I'm pretty sure that had been the case.

Like so, I had been learning basic combat skills, expanding beyond the swordsmanship and skill with shields.

And in my process of learning, the goblin instructor had been killed a countless number of times.

Well, seeing how he reseted every time I came back from the Waiting Room, I don't think he actually existed.

I wish the goblin instructor was a little stronger. It feels too inefficient to learn from someone weaker than me.

This time, I had managed to beat him with just a sword and no shield.

How should I fight him next time?

Hand to hand and without a weapon?

Or maintaining a distance advantageous to the instructor, yet bring the tempo back?

I walked back to the Waiting Room as I planned out a schedule.

The 2nd Round would finally finish.

Considering that I had been crawling through just the 1st Floor for the entire 1st Round, the 2nd Round had been really eventful.

Just looking at the floor numbers, I had gone from Floor 2 to 4.

Soon, the 2nd Round would finish and the 3rd would begin.

And just like during the 1st and 2nd Round, new people would enter the 1st Floor.

I don't know how many people would enter Hell Difficulty this time, but I hope a lack in communication won't happen again.

[You have entered the Floor 4 Waiting Room]

As soon as I entered the Waiting Room, I opened the shop and bought some potato chips and coke.

I had been taking care of my meals with mostly jerkies and rice balls, excluding the cake I had with Kirikiri.

I may splurge my points to buy a set of equipment, but I would never go beyond reason to buy food.

One reason might be because I don't really care about the taste of my food, but the other reason was to stop myself from losing focus and becoming lazy.

If one day, I felt like I wanted to just rest for today,

if I wanted to skip out on my daily schedule,

if I wanted to delay the Tutorial to next day.

Those feelings may add up and cause me to become slothful, so I'm forcing myself into the corner to prevent it.

Today I will have a small break.

I've already finished my daily routine.

I've been through so much in the 2nd Round.

I've achieved so much in this time.

Maybe, I've already become a little relaxed.

[Round 3 will begin]

Now, the newbies will be coming to the tutorial.

[Hell Difficulty, Forums (1/1)]

Hmmm...

It seems nobody chose the Hell difficulty in this round.

Well, I guess this was normal.

How many people would actually choose the highest difficulty from a strange, floating hologram they've never seen before.

Actually, saying it like that made me feel like I'm the strange one.

It wasn't too bad anyways.

I didn't have to worry about the meaningless deaths newcomers would have faced in Hell.

One problem in my mind was removed.

I looked through the Community relaxedly.

I rip open the bag of potato chips.

Soon, the comments containing fear and confusion from the newbies came.

I was not watching because I found their misfortune entertaining.

I was curious of the news from the outside world that they would tell after the confusion died down.

The 2nd Round finished, and the 3rd began.

What happened in the outside world during the last month?

Had that secretary in the Blue House been arrested,

Had the president stepped down?

How had the idols who returned last month done with their new album?

There were mountains of questions I wanted to ask.

It seemed that many had the same idea as me, as there are a lot of people logged onto the Community at this time.

[Kim Joo Hyuk, Floor 1: What is this? What is this Community

and Tutorial. Actually, where is this place?]

[Lee Chul Min, Floor 1: I guess I've lived too long]

[Lee Gi Chan, Floor 1: I was just drinking until now, what is this...]

It seemed someone came here while being drunk like me.

The people who were here before made detailed explanations to alleviate the newcomers' confusion.

It may have seemed grim, as they could not return home and they may actually die.

But at least they could understand and adjust to this place much faster.

The fear of the unknown was much more dangerous than any observable threat.

I was waiting for them to slowly calm down, until I saw a few strange comments.

[Lee Mi Yeon, Floor 1: Am I dead? Is this like hell?]

[Kim Jin, Floor 1: I'm sure I was about to be eaten by a monster,

but even my leg is healed]

[Park Byung Jin, Floor 1: Is this related to those portals the monsters come from?]

What was this crazy talk?

Were they drunk in unison?

Even the pre-existing population who was answering to the questions from before wasn't able answer back.

[Kim Min Hyuk, Floor 3: The newcomers from the 3rd Round, what is this about a monster and portals? What happened before entering the Tutorial?]

The answer to that question was even more shocking.

Apparently a few days after the 2nd Round had started, an abnormality that had never been seen before occurred throughout the world.

Mysterious portals had appeared across the world, and 3 days later, monsters began appearing from those portals.

These monsters easily ignored impacts from small arms such as pistols, forcing military units to use heavy weapons to respond against them.

Nations who were able to mobilise their armies the moment portals appeared didn't suffer too much, but the smaller nations who had not had a proper military were destroyed on the spot.

The nations who initially were able to barely manage with their own portals were now facing monsters from outside their borders, thus damage was beginning to spread.

Plus, undetected portals from caves, underground, jungles or below the lake began to spit out monsters, causing the frontlines to crumble.

In the 2 weeks since the portals had appeared, the number of casualties went beyond the total casualties from the 2nd World War.

The problem was that new portals were still appearing.

There were areas which were so heavily occupied with monsters that the nation had given up;

other nations had had their government abolished.

The people who had faced this apocalyptic event went mad.

Public order was non-existent and people killed each other for food and weapons.

Shady cults began to appear. The rich hid in their private safe houses, while the poor hid within the ruins of the cities.

Korea was no exception.

At least Korea's portal crisis had been late compared to other countries.

The first portal had appeared after monsters began to wage war against other nations.

Therefore, they were able to react quickly when the first portal appeared.

Martial law had been in place even before the first portal had appeared and the armies from the front lines had been deployed south on standby.

As the portals appeared throughout the worlds, the battalions were deployed before the 3rd day had even passed.

But, whether it was because the preparation wasn't sufficient or the monster's attack had been too beyond their expectations, they had failed to defend the Chungcheong Province and the Northern Frontier had been made within the Gyunggi metropolis, while the Southern Frontier had been made south of Chungcheong Province to stop the spread of monsters.

The total casualties had been so many that they weren't able to quote a number, a province had been destroyed to rubble and new portals were still appearing as of now, but it was at least better than the crisis that most of the other countries were facing.

But, no man could find relief in those facts.

Because of the news from the newcomers, those who had figured out what happened were asking for the safety of their loved ones.

So many comments appeared at once that I couldn't even read most of them.

I wasn't an exception.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 4: Suwon. How's Suwon? Is there a portal there too?]

Thankfully, there hadn't been any yet.

I had stayed on the Community to see if any of my friends and families had entered amongst the newcomers or if anyone might have at least known of their safety.

However, none of them were able to give me an answer.

[Round 3, Day 0. 18:20]

... It had been 18 hours since the 3rd Round had started.

18 hours.

A very long time.

The fact that I had been simply watching the Community for 18 hours without training or following my daily routine felt disturbing.

As if it should have never happened.

Thankfully, I had very few contacts.

Most of my friends had been living in Suwon or in the army.

Since they said the army was safest during these times, it lessened my worries.

My family was also in Suwon.

If you had asked how good my relations were with my family, I'd answer it's not good.

But I still wished that they were safe.

And that they didn't run into any accidents.

I realised my mind had begun to sidetrack.

What was I thinking before.

The Community showed me the answer.

[Jung Jin Chul, Floor 2: Maybe we can help?]

I had managed to spot this amongst the flood of comments.

I had finally come back to my senses after reading this and averted my eyes from the Community.

There was information that you could return back to real world after clearing 100 floors.

If I were to clear all 100, how strong would I be.

Perhaps beyond the modern firepower.

This Tutorial world which I had been imprisoned in without an explanation had not told me neither aim of the place nor the method on how to escape.

Maybe, the Tutorial had appeared to give us the strength to fight back against those monsters.

Just as the name Tutorial said.

I wasn't the only one to think this way.

The high rankers of the Community all agreed to release information and walkthroughs and to join hands to beat the Tutorial.

Soon everyone agreed that, everyone's number one aim was to swiftly clear the Tutorial.

1 month after the Portal crisis and 3 rounds since the Tutorial started...

The Tutorial Speed Run had started.

Chapter 37 - Tutorial 4th Floor (3)

[Round 3, Day 0, 07:40]

My eyes opened instantly.

At some point, I started to immediately wake up as soon as I've had a specific amount of sleep.

Was it the result of my superhuman growth?

It was convenient that I no longer needed an alarm now.

After setting the quick clear of Tutorial as my goal, I reduced my sleep time to only 2 hours.

Since the Waiting Room could recover my body to perfect condition, it made sleep unnecessary. The act of sleeping was just routine at this point.

The reason I continued to keep that 2 hour sleep was for mental health and in preparation to have a functional lifestyle in an outdoor environment within the Tutorial.

With the extra 2 hours I've gained from reducing my sleeptime, I began to make a walkthrough from floor 1 to 3, remembering all

the traps I had to go through.

It was for others who entered Hell Difficulty mode after me.

There may have been no one who entered this Round, but that wouldn't be the case forever.

I've also began to research with others in the Community by sharing information.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 4: So I'm saying, don't just stab your arm, but dig through it while trying to search for nerves. Your resistance skills go up faster that way]

[Kim Sang Shik, Floor 5: I've heard of many retarded things recently, but your method takes the cake]

What was the problem with that?

It was not like I was telling them to heat the arrow in fire as well.

Some information wasn't accepted, but with many people actively participating, the process of gathering and analyzing have gotten much faster.

This was especially the case for those who were worried about their families.

Until now, sharing information was mostly done by the Rankers, as if to tell their stories and brag about the rewards they had gained.

With more information being released, more people became confident enough to advance through the Tutorial.

The greatest benefits went to those in the lower floors - Floors 1 and 2.

It was to be expected, as almost all the factors in those floors had already been analysed and noted.

Those who specialised or had occupations in martial arts or sports released their training tips as well.

Those really came in handy.

Especially the tips released by a personal trainer. The exercises that could be done without equipments were like rain in the desert sands.

In the Tutorial world which we were all kidnapped into, we followed its instructions out of necessity, as the system requested it, but those who truly advanced through it were only a few rankers, including me.

But, most of the people have realised the importance of clearing the Tutorial.

They may not put their lives on the line yet, but at least it gave them a reason for doing so.

There were also those who didn't jump to clearing like others, but instead supported others in their cause.

Not everyone had the same determination, but everyone was starting to ride the bandwagon.

And, these new information would help accelerate the growth of those who weren't so dedicated.

The Tutorial Walkthrough started without an issue.

[Round 3, Day 1. 00:00]

I stood on the portal as soon as Round 3 began.

The portal's light surrounded me, as I was immediately moved to the stage.

As soon as I had confirmed that the teleportation finished, I ran.

With the Wind Spirit's Blessing's 2nd effect, acceleration, my speed sped up at an exponential rate.

Had I been too rash?

I began to wonder, as the winds began to screech in my ears.

However, I saw the Goblin Instructor before I even finished that thought.

Kuwaaa!

I had gotten used to that warcry.

I've even become quite fond of him, due to the continuous battles I've had in the last few days against him. Now, it was time to say goodbye.

First, I had to reduce this speed.

The Wind Spirit's Blessing may be effective while on the move, but I was still not used to fighting with such speed.

I closed the distance by blinking into the striking range of the Instructor.

His axe swung immediately.

A quick reaction as always.

Maybe he knew about my Blink skill already.

There was no need to wait for the axe.

In fact, I ran forward and raised my shield to the axe.

Thud!

With the strike hitting much closer than intended by the Instructor, there wasn't much impact on the shield.

And without stopping, I stabbed the sword into his right shoulder.

All in a single motion.

I couldn't take the sword out easily, but at least it would make one of his arms useless.

The Instructor screamed once more and swung with his right arm.

It seemed he would use his size if it came to it.

I use my arm to maintain distance from him while taking a quick step backwards.

And threw out a low kick as well.

Now, with my superhuman body, I would perform the impossible feat of doing a low kick whilst traveling backwards in mid air.

There was a theory about the Strength Stat in the Community - that Strength didn't just improve strength in arms and legs, but in all the muscles in the body.

This included muscles that were usually difficult to train like the waist or joint muscles.

If it was not in the form of Stats, these muscles weren't easy to improve along with stabilizing or improving the movement of the person.

Therefore, improving the Strength Stat was of utmost importance.

In conclusion, strength was best.

That's how the theory went.

There were many who were for it and against it. Due to a lack of evidence, everyone eventually moved on from it.

I was the same, but I did think that some of those facts were in

fact correct.

Because of the difference in height, my lowkick landed on the knee joint of the Instructor.

With a sound you shouldn't hear coming from a body, the kneecap poked out the skin.

The match was over at this point.

In fact, the match was over before it had even began.

As the instructor lost his right leg, which was used to support his heavy axe and injured shoulder, his stance broke immediately.

I smacked the instructor's face as he began to collapse.

Then pushed his chest while his head was stretched backwards, knocking him over.

I quickly took a mount position and threw a punch.

The instructor tried to block it by raising his arms.

As he wasn't in a normal state at this point and having still had a sword stuck in his shoulder, he was struck in the head.

My punch went in between his arms and struck cleanly into his face.

His head had hit the floor hard, before bouncing back into the air.

He was completely dazed.

Forget moving, he probably wasn't even conscious at this point.

No need to tire myself out at this point.

I grabbed onto his head and chin and twisted them.

The end.

The difference in speed had created this outcome.

It had not just increased my chances of dodging and accuracy like in games, I could also perform multiple actions during my attack.

Another way to explain was that there was no way I could lose, as long as there wasn't too much of a difference in other factors. However, those situations were extremely rare.

The instructor's body twitched for a moment, then began to fade away completely.

Sadly, his axe disappeared with him

I wish that was a drop that I could get from killing him.

The birthstone did not drop this time either.

I wiped the oil from the instructor's hair onto my armour and took my sword back.

And I marched on forward.

I knew what the next challenge was.

I didn't complete it, but I had scouted it out of curiosity.

The next challenge was also goblin, but this time, not 1 but 5 of them.

1 to 5 goblins.

That sounded about right.

Seemed to be a good increase in difficulty as well.

However, advancing in such a linear way was not how Hell

Difficulty did it.

These 5 goblins had made a trench to wait for their enemy.

There was even a wooden roof on top of the trench.

The lineup was 2 spearmen, 2 archers, 1 goblin with a weird staff.

I guess the goblin with a staff was like a wizard or a shaman.

Considering that a trench was used to reduce the amount of exposure from bombardment, I could imagine that staff goblin would fire something in a straight line, similar to a gun.

I could easily pierce through arrows and spears from a trench.

The problem was that the users of the bow and spear were Hell Difficulty special muscle goblins.

I would have to get into the trench as quickly as possible and fight in close quarter combat, surrounded by 5 muscle heads, in an arena called the trench.

I guess there was no need to fight with a disadvantage this time.

They even had the mystery weapon called the staff.

[Blink]

I used the Blink skill 3 times in a row straight up.

Wow, that was quite high.

If I didn't have the memories from the 3rd Boss room, I would have gotten cold feet for a second.

[Talaria's Wings]

The crystal wings spread behind me.

And the gliding effect took place.

I began to glide through the air, as if paragliding.

The winds hitting my face felt refreshing.

Instead of this dark Tutorial Corridor, I would have liked to fly above a field or on the beach in sunlight.

I should try that out in Kirikiri's hills after finishing Floor 4.

[God of Adventures feels satisfied]

...Hm, it had been a while.

He hadn't made much of an appearance after giving me the wings.

To be honest, I thought that was because he was embarrassed by the description for Talaria's Wings.

Just as before when I tested it, there was no noise from flying.

Maybe it was because I was gliding using a skill and not actually flying using wings.

I raised my altitude, sticking close to the ceiling.

The corridor of Tutorial was dark.

Even with night vision, it was still dark.

I wouldn't be detected easily, unless I was closeby, especially since I was not even in their sights.

I could begin to see the trench.

Usually, being on standby in this situation would have meant that the goblins would slack off or play around with each other.

But these goblins were constantly on guard, looking for intruders.

Thankfully these goblins weren't looking to the sky as well.

As long as they didn't look up, I wouldn't be in their field of vision.

Plus the wooden roof on top of the trenches made flying above them even easier.

First, I remained in the air and looked at the position of the goblins.

It wasn't easy because of the roof, but with continued effort, I eventually found out.

[You have received Sneak Lv.1]

Oh. An unexpected reward.

I should try to grind my Sneak skill later.

I managed to bypass the trench in secret.

I began to wonder what would happen if I went on, ignoring the trench.

I let that thought slide for now.

It'd be annoying if I got detected later and got pincerred from the front and the back.

I lowered my attitude towards the back of the trench.

The Glide skill allowed me to take flight in which ever direction I wanted.

Such a convenient skill.

There was an exit at the back of the trench just like the one at the front.

The formation of the goblins was:

2 spear goblins,

2 archers,

and a staff goblin.

The staff goblin was at the very back.

As soon as my feet touched the ground, I immediately folded my wings and jumped into the trench.

The staff goblin quickly turned around, but it had been too late.

"Puek!"

The sword found its mark - his throat.

I think I had talent to be an assassin as well.

I had already managed to take down who I imagined to be the most annoying opponent.

A good start.

The 4 at the front quickly turned around to face me.

The archer goblins ditched their bows and took out their daggers from their pockets.

The spear goblins fell backwards, as their long spears were getting in the way.

While the goblins were busy trying to make a formation, I blinked towards them, only a small distance away.

To be precise, in front of the 2 spear goblins, and in between the 2 archer ones.

[Talaria's Wings]

I summoned my wings again.

The blue, beautiful crystal wings spread wide in both directions.

Stab!

The two archers next to me were stabbed by the ends of the wings and pushed into the walls of the trench.

Since the wings had the density of a metal and their edges were sharp, I could use them in offence like this.

It seemed that both archers didn't die immediately and instead struggled.

I think I've suppressed those 2 for now.

I undid the Talaria's Wings as it restricted my movement in the small trench and threw a throwing knife at one of the spear goblins as I ran towards him.

Chapter 38 - Tutorial 4th Floor (4)

The goblin knocked the dagger away without any problem.

But, the action caused him to delay his attacks.

The other goblin thrust his spear at me.

I parried the spear with my shield.

The spear slid across the surface of the shield.

I closed the distance on the goblin by pushing through with my shield.

You shouldn't make such an honest stab.

You're lacking compared to the goblin instructor.

As I quickly approach him, the goblin strengthened his grip on his spear and attempted to push me backwards with the shaft.

That was a mistake.

You should have ditched the spear by now.

You can't use the middle of the shaft in such stance to push me off.

Even if there was a difference in strength between us.

[Battle Focus]

As I approach the goblin, I stepped on his left foot, and drove the sword into his neck.

Immediately, I turned back.

The remaining goblin spearman had given up on his spear and opted for hand-to-hand combat.

Trying to face an opponent who had mingled with your companion in a trench with a spear would be difficult.

Thanks to the accelerated senses from the Battle Focus skill, the goblin's punch seemed to move slowly.

I calmly dodged the punch and threw a counter towards the goblin's face.

While he was dazed from the counter punch, I kicked at the goblin's chest.

The goblin fell to the ground from the strike.

I quickly took a mounting stance and used the throwing dagger nearby to end its life.

The two incapacitated archers were dealt with swiftly afterwards.

The power of the attack from the Wings of Talaria seemed quite significant.

Usually, the strength which moved the wings came from the muscles connected from the wings to the back.

But, these wings weren't connected to my body in the first place.

The strength and speed of these wings were probably due to the increase in its level.

The level of Wings of Talaria was maxed out.

Plus the wings were not made of feathers, but crystals that were more dense than ordinary metals.

It was likely that just flapping the wings would have stronger impact than any attack using my own strength.

All skills gifted by the gods seemed very overpowering, no matter what they were.

That's how the trench was cleared.

None of the goblins dropped a birth stone.

As I thought back to how the fight went, I was once again impressed by how OP the gifted skills were.

I got out of the trench and continued to advance through the Tutorial

"Good. Very good."

"What's so good, Boss Chang Suk."

"It has nothing to do with you."

With the constant replies flowing in, I closed the Community with a satisfied smile.

The Representatives were growing faster than I had expected.

Already, most of the 1st Floor Waiting Rooms had been overtaken

and some of the 2nd Floor Waiting Rooms have been overtaken as well.

It was expected only 1 or 2 Waiting Rooms in Easy Difficulty Floor 1 had no relation with the Representatives.

Good. It was very good.

By the 3rd Round, most of the new comers had adapted quickly and many have shown positive responses to the Representatives.

Perhaps this was already quite common on the outside.

Hahahaha.

There were no words to describe this satisfaction.

Would there be any time like this throughout my entire life?

No.

This. Truly was the best.

I heard a scream from the corner.

It was nothing much.

My minions were showing an example to those slaves.

They can't even die that easy.

Since there was no chance they would become disabled, there was no need to show any mercy.

Ah, but that didn't mean they couldn't die.

Seems like it was actually possible.

Soon, the 24 hours I was allowed to spend in the Waiting Room would finish.

But it didn't matter, as I had already been through this 2 times.

I'll progress until the Boss Room like before, and once the 3rd Round has finished, I'll be back in the Waiting Room.

I would have to remain alone in the Tutorial for 29 days, but there was a sweet reward awaiting at the end.

I could wait all day.

The one consideration were the slaves.

We had already warned them what would happen if they were to progress through the Tutorial without our approval.

That example in the corner was part of it.

Of course, I'm sure they wouldn't listen to my words so easily.

But, there were more of us in the 2nd Floor as well.

We've already told them that we would punish them dearly if we were to find any of them in the 2nd floor.

And it would happen.

Some of them might be sent to the Waiting Rooms without any of the Representatives.

But that didn't matter either.

Those guys couldn't come back to the 1st Floor.

Our greatest clients were the newbies just entering the Tutorial for the first time and the cowards who had no courage to progress through the Tutorial.

We had been put all our efforts into increasing the number of cowards.

We engraved fear into their bodies.

If those bastards stayed in the 1st Floor by the start of the 4th Round,

The Representatives would stabilise at that point.

I could then get an infinite supply of jerkies and water from the weak newbies.

The cowards who have stayed in the Tutorial for more than a Round would also need to get the water and jerkies from us.

Strength and food.

With both weapons at hand, we showed the power of the Representatives.

It was a perfect plan, no matter how I thought about it.

With few more Rounds, there wouldn't be any Waiting Rooms in Floor 1 that weren't associated with the Representatives.

Then, I will expand upwards.

That was how my kingdom would be finished.

It was an unreliable kingdom, made by the loopholes in the system, but at the same time it was protected by it.

Unreliable, but it would never fall.

But I'm sure there was going to be a kink in the plan.

There's always a few arrogant bastards who would rebel against the powerful.

Some would dream of getting revenge by advancing to the boss room and returning back to the Waiting Room.

But they would number at best 2.

They might not be able to post anything on the Community, but they would be able to request help for the higher floors using the 1:1 message.

That was when these messages would pay their worth.

The messages coming from the top floors or from what we called Rankers these days.

I wiped the blood off the knife by using a towel from the inventory.

All this time, I had just been dodging arrows for most part, but these annoyances were starting to pop up, along with fighting against monsters for the first time.

Now that I look at it, the shield wasn't in such a good state either.

The leather strap was mostly worn out, and the surface of the shield was quite damaged as well.

Of course it would all be repaired the moment I returned to the Waiting Room, but I couldn't just return there every time there was something wrong with my equipment.

I should change my weapons once I cleared the 4th Floor.

I considered using a different weapon like a spear or a blunt weapon, but I decided to use something I was accustomed to.

I had continued with the hunt for goblins.

These goblins had dug not just trenches, but had built walls and formations as well.

Their weapons were more varied too, from the shamans with their staves to archers with their hooks and crossbows.

Of course they still weren't much of a threat.

I had become a master at dodging projectiles from a distance.

Plus there was no need to dodge, I could just block them with Wings of Talaria if need be.

There was no damage to the wings from blocking the projectiles.

As long as I was in the air, the gliding skill would continue to work so I can wrap my body in air , while closing in for an attack.

It had gotten so easy to fight against the goblins, I couldn't believe I had so much trouble fighting against just 1 at the start.

The superior dexterity and skills may have taken a reason, but I think the skills from the gods were just too superior.

I was getting worried that using them too much would hamper my growth, but, thanks to my superior strength, I had gotten used to combat more easily.

[You have received Basic Swordsmanship Lv.4]

[You have received Basic Shield skills Lv.4]

[You have received Basic Hand-to-Hand skills Lv.2]

[You have received Battle Focus Lv.9]

[You have received Sneak Lv.2]

[You have received Basic Throwing Skill Lv.1]

These were my proof.

Despite my reliance on the God's skills, the continued battles had given me multiple new skills and improved others as well.

Among them, the Battle Focus which have been stagnant for a long time had grown exponentially.

Perhaps it was because I've begun to use it in a greater variety of situations instead of just using it to dodge arrows.

I think the most important part about skill growth was not repetition, but varied experience.

[Kuwaaa!]

I was getting a deja vu here.

I heard a goblin's warcry from a distance.

As I moved forward, I was a goblin wearing similar clothes to the Instructor I had met at the start of the 4th Floor.

His height was slightly smaller.

Around 190cm.

Plus he had no weapons and was unarmed in both hands.

But he looked even more brutish.

And probably stronger.

Otherwise he wouldn't come after the Goblin Instructor.

This was the first one-on-one I had since the Goblin Instructor.

Plus, it was an unarmed opponent.

I stepped forward with a slight feeling of anticipation.

As I approached him, the goblin screamed as he charged in.

It was the same pattern as the Instructor wasn't it?

As I made that thought, I focused on the goblin's arms and legs.

Once the distance had been somewhat closed, the goblin's fist suddenly turned red.

Then,

Bang!

I had taken a blow to the chest and rolled backwards.

What was this!

I lifted myself up only to see that the goblin had already gotten very close.

Once more, the goblin's right hand turned red.

[Battle Focus]

The goblin's red fist was projected forward.

Literally!

He didn't even move his legs, waist or shoulders to make that punch.

It had just came out towards me like a bullet in front of his fist aiming for my face.

I had planned on using Battle Focus to dodge the fist and aim for a counterattack, but there had been no time.

I just raised my shield to try to block the blow.

Thud!

With a blunt echo, I could feel my body flying backwards once more.

[Blink]

I removed all the momentum on my body and landed in front of the Goblin.

And against the goblin who couldn't react immediately, I smacked his face with my hand, sword still in my grips.

The goblin's face turned from the strike, but his eyes were still aimed at me.

It slowly retreated backwards.

I took another step forwards and tried to make a high-kick at the retreating goblin.

Of course, it wouldn't get hit by such an obvious attack.

My kick cut through the air,

and my back was left exposed.

Heng, you thought I had made a mistake right?

[Wings of Talaria]

With a swoosh sound the large wings spread outward.

I thought that it would get pierced by the wings, but the goblin leapt backwards and dodged the attack.

I was more surprised that he was able to dodge this than his bullet-like fists.

It felt like this thing knew all my skills, just like the instructor had before.

I could finally take a breathe with the distance the goblin had

made.

I spat the blood that had pooled in my mouth.

Damn, my tooth was broken as well.

No matter how I saw it, I was sure that red bullet fist thing was a skill.

How could you use a skill without any restrictions and in succession like that.

Wasn't that too OP?

I guess I couldn't say much, with my Blink and wings and all.

The goblin slowly closed in once again.

I also joined in and threw my sword as I stepped forward.

Despite having added a throwing skill as well, the goblin parried the attack easily.

I took out my dagger from my waist and gained speed.

Before going into the goblin's strike range, I threw my dagger once again.

It's range was most definitely smaller compared to the instructor.

He didn't have an axe and he was shorter as well.

But whether it didn't think that I'd throw my only weapon or that it just couldn't react at such a close distance, the goblin hesitated.

It had only managed to block the attack, but that had been effective enough.

I was of course superior in speed.

If I could make an opening just before I got into my striking range,

I could use that opportunity in an infinite number of ways.

The goblin raised its guard and tried to defend.

Since it had metal armour, I had to attack it in the face or its arms and legs in order to make a proper hit.

The goblin knew that as well.

So, I pushed the goblin's stomach with my kick.

Both of us had similar strength compared to their height and weight.

In this situation, the one with lower centre of gravity would always have an advantage.

I learnt that from the instructor.

My kick didn't make much of an impact due to the armour, but it had managed to push it backwards.

[Blink]

I blinked a small distance of a step and kicked at the thigh of the goblin that was ever so slightly in the air.

I made a strike that shook a leg horizontally.

It was going to be difficult to land properly.

The goblin attempted to regain its stance after landing on one of his legs, but there was no way I would allow that to happen.

I tackled the goblin with my shield raised in front of me and landed a solid punch in the goblin's face

Bang!

At the same time, the red fist from the goblin struck at my face.

Damn, how would you still have so much power in that position.

What an OP skill.

I took a clean counter without any defence.

I was launched into the air, then rolled several times on the ground.

Damn, I was feeling dizzy.

When I raised my head, it seems the goblin took a hard hit as well and couldn't stand up as a result.

I was feeling another deja vu here.

I pushed on my knees to stand and shouted.

"This is the power of pain and stun resistance! You bastard."

We took blows from each other, but in the end I was the one standing and he wasn't.

It means that I had won.

I kicked at the head of the goblin who still lying on the ground to make it unconscious and used the dagger on the floor to finish the job.

[Goros's Birthstone]

Description: A birthstone given by the tribe's great shaman when the Red Eye Tribe's most Finicky Instructor Goros was born.

Huah, I had managed to win.

This was the first opponent I had faced who used a skill.

That too, it was an OP skill without any cost or delay between consecutive attacks.

... Weren't the goblins just too strong?

[Level up!]

[Your strength went up by 1. Your dexterity went up by 1.

Your mana went up by 1. Wind Spirit's blessings leveled up by 1.
Your sneak level went up by 1. Your stun resistance leveled up
by 1]

I have no problems with that. No sir.

Chapter 39 - Tutorial 4th Floor (5)

I decided to stop and think as I took a sip from the Healing Fountain.

The second Instructor that I had faced was the last trial of the 4th Floor before the Boss Room.

The 2 instructors at the start and end of the 4th Floor were much stronger than the rest of the goblins.

Their physique, skill and experience were at a different level.

Of course, an average goblin in Hell difficulty was from a different species compared to one in Normal difficulty.

Hm... What to do now?

My original plan had been to proceed through the Tutorial until I had hit a wall.

It was an obvious plan, since I was aiming to clear the Tutorial quickly.

But, would rushing through really lead to a faster clear?

Just now, the victory against the second Instructor was a hard one.

Although, I would have a much easier time if I fought him a second time.

I thought it would be too reckless to challenge the Boss Room now.

Let's go back to the start.

Grow as much as possible in this floor, just like I always had in the others.

And when I felt that my growth was stagnating, that was when I'd leave.

My clear speed was not slow.

In fact, it was very fast.

There were those who left the 4th Floor and were challenging the 5th and 6th, but they were all in Normal or below difficulties.

In Hard difficulty, someone had finally gotten to the 3rd Floor with the First Clear bonus.

My method wasn't wrong.

Let's not be too impatient and do what I've always done.

I admit, I have gotten quite anxious ever since the shocking news.

To the point that I've been focusing purely on clearing the 4th Floor and ignoring everything else.

There were so many skills I had yet to improve.

Skills such as resistances, swordsmanship, shield skills, hand-to-hand and the newly acquired sneak skill.

Focus.

No matter how much I hurried, there was nothing I could do when I was only at the Floor 4.

If I was worried about the others outside the Tutorial, I should use that as a motivation to improve even more.

Alright, let's go.

Back to the Waiting Room.

Let's try to clear this floor without using the God Skills this time.

My mind was more at ease compared to when I had first started the 4th Floor.

Whether it was because I had finally cleared my thoughts or because I had managed to escape from my anxiousness, I didn't know.

[Round 3, Day 14. 20:30]

"Good. Very good."

I smiled as I looked at myself in the mirror.

The blue magic circle on my forehead was getting more and more faint.

In one or two more days, and it would be so faint you wouldn't even be able to notice it unless you were actually trying to look for it.

But, the magic circle began to shine again as soon once I had used the Blink skill once, until I've used all 5 charges.

Well, nothing I can do about that.

I just shouldn't use it in a place with others around.

As long as it didn't shine every time, it was fine.

I was just happy I didn't have to live like a power ranger with that magic circle on my face.

I put the mirror away and took out a cup instead.

I checked on my Status as I took a scoop from the Healing Fountain.

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv.8

Strength: 20

Dexterity: 38

Vitality: 23

Mana: 28

Skill: Battle Focus Lv.10 Willpower Lv.5 Awakening Lv.1
Night Vision Lv.2 Bright Vision Lv.1 Charge Lv.2 Sneak Lv.4

Natural Regeneration Lv.2 Improved Senses Lv.4 Increased Field of Vision Lv.1 Toughened Skin Lv.3 Basic Swordsmanship Lv.4 Basic Shield Skill Lv.4 Basic Hand to Hand Skill Lv.2 Basic Throwing Skill Lv.1 Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv.2 Mind Corruption Immunity Lv.1 Pain Resistance Lv.11 Bleed Resistance Lv.4 Stun Resistance Lv.3 Pierce Resistance Lv.2 Poison resistance Lv.4 Paralysis Resistance Lv.6 Heat Resistance Lv.4 Burn Resistance Lv.6 Cold Resistance Lv.4 Frostbite Resistance Lv.3 Blink Emblem Lv.Max Talaria's Wings Lv.Max

Extra: The God of Slowness was appeased by your actions.

My growth had been extraordinary.

Not only had my combat skills such as Battle focus improved, but skills such as Pierce Resistance and Toughened Skin had improved as well.

The increase in Wind Spirit's Blessing from my previous Level Up was also motivating.

The God Skills too.

I had gotten more accustomed to using Talaria's Wings, as I was able to use them in offense and defence more efficiently.

Flying had also become much easier.

Now, it was really time to challenge the Boss Room.

In honesty, I didn't think that I had already hit the wall for my growth in this floor already.

But clearing the floor twice a day, everyday had made it too easy and was become inefficient as there was no tension or danger.

I could defeat the final Instructor without a problem now.

Even his skill's path and speed had seemed very obvious.

I was scared I would lose all tension if I continued like this, even if I could grow potentially more here.

It was time to increase the difficulty again.

Past the thick fogs, I reached the familiar stone doors.

The 4th Floor may have been easy, but the Boss Room would be different.

I had never completed them easily.

The stone doors opened, as I was moved to a mountain.

Where the hell was this.

In the sky, the stars and the moon shined brightly.

I stopped thinking and just stared at the sight of the pitch black sky and the concert of the stars.

This was the first time I had seen a nighttime sky since I had come into the Tutorial.

Actually, I had never seen such a beautiful night sky in my entire life.

I had been living in the cities my entire life, so the only thing I could see at night was the moon and Polaris.

A message brought me back from admiring the sky in a daze.

[The Final Trial of Floor 4 will begin]

[Defeat the Goblin King]

Goblin King? Where was it?

The message of course didn't give me an answer.

Hm...

I was currently in the middle of the mountain.

To put it simply, I must either go up or down the mountain, in order to find this Goblin King.

Let's go up.

The reason was simple.

Because it seemed harder.

In Hell difficulty, the answer was always the harder option.

Soon enough, I found out that my decision was correct.

After climbing the mountain for 15 minutes, I could see a fort at the peak.

Ha!

My name is Lee Ho Jae and I am the Hell Specialist.

In order to scout the fort, I hid in the trees and took out

binoculars from my inventory.

Since I used my Sneak Skill, which acted as a passive skill, noticing me from atop those walls would be difficult.

The fort's walls were 5m tall.

Quite the height.

The gates were shut tightly.

I didn't see another path from here.

The fort was quite big.

I can see 20 goblins manning the walls thanks to the torches that lined the walls.

I wouldn't have a clue as to how many were in the fort.

How was someone without Blink and Talaria's Wings supposed to beat this?

Um... I didn't know.

It seems rather difficult if you didn't have a way to scale the walls in an instant.

As for me, this wasn't much of a trial thanks to Blink and Talaria's Wings.

I could kill those 20 goblins quickly, and take care of the others while I had the high ground on the wall.

If I dropped their numbers that way, then it was an easy clear.

If things went wrong I can just jump down the walls.

Even if they tried to chase after me by opening the gates, they wouldn't be able to chase me once I ran into the forest.

I was starting to get worried because it seems too easy.

Maybe the Goblin King wasn't in that fort.

Was the theme like how Guan Yu passed through the 5 gates?

Let's just focus on this fort for now.

[Blink]

I used the Blink to stick right underneath the wall.

At this position, they didn't have the angle to see me from the wall.

I snuck my way to the wall with the fewest guards and then used blink again.

Up this time.

With my Sneak Lv.4, along with the silent Blink skill, I could scale up the wall without getting detected.

Oh, it felt like I was in a stealth game. It made me excited.

I slowly crept to the back of the closest goblin guard.

The guards had no clue about my presence, either because they weren't paying attention to their job or because my sneak skill was working too well.

With the sword in reverse grip, I wrapped around the goblin to stop him from moving, putting my hand over his mouth as I stabbed into its throat.

Nobody seemed to notice when they do this in the movies.

But the goblin continued to shake around and moan even as he got stabbed, which made every other guard notice and look at my

direction.

Kieeeeek!

One of them shouted with a loud voice.

Their shrieks began to echo throughout the mountains.

Haha, I guess that's it for stealth action.

Let's just think I started with 1 kill in the bag.

Time for battle now.

The goblins began to charge at me with a variety of weapons.

I change my sword's grip into a normal one and spread my Talaria's Wings wide open.

"Wow."

It was a sight which you had to be impressed with.

The sight of the sun rising over the horizon from atop a mountain.

How the dark world had begun to colors to orange as the sun began to expose itself slowly.

"Wow."

Was this really an illusionary world?

I was thinking that this had to be some sort of an illusion or another space created by the Tutorial.

But was it possible to replicate such an awe inspiring scene with just an illusion?

Or had they just dropped me into an existing world within the universe?

That was how I was starting to think.

Maybe it won't be so bad living here and building a small log house as a shelter.

It would be a destitute life, but being able to watch this scene everyday would make me happy enough.

After a few more minutes of watching the sunrise and the sun was finally in the air above the horizon.

Hm.

I think I can go through today feeling more happy and ambitious.

In fact,

[You have watched a beautiful scenery. Luck +5]

I didn't find it strange to see a message like that appear.

Now.

Let's finish my plan.

Last night, I had managed to take over this fort completely.

There were 32 goblins stationed in this fort.

They were your average Hell goblins.

Not at the level of the Instructors.

Their numbers were lower than I had expected, which made

clearing it not a problem.

And, as I had feared, the Goblin King had not been in this Fort.

But, I think I've found where he would be - in the inner castle whose tower was at the centre of the giant city with the 4 mountains at its north, south, east and west.

That was where it would be.

It was a city.

Not a tribe, but a city.

With polished roads, and stone buildings - a developed city.

I could see how developed their city was, even by looking at it from the mountain.

... Weren't the goblins' civilization too developed?

I was sure the description of the Goblin's birthstone described tribes and shamans, but that was really just a tribe?

The city seemed big enough for tens of thousands of goblins to live in and there was even an outer wall surrounding the city.

Beyond the wall was a plain wide enough to take at least half a day to traverse across.

Lastly, with the city at its centre, there were 4 forts situated at the peak of the north, south, east and western mountains as its primary line of defense.

The fort I took last night had been just one of the 4 forts.

I guess you could call it the eastern fort.

Hm.

I feel like I was stuck again.

First, fighting them in that wide plain was wrong.

There were more than tens of thousands of residents living in that city.

If all of the residents were goblins, then that city had soldiers numbering tens of thousands.

If I was surrounded by tens of thousands of soldiers, I wouldn't be able to guarantee my survival.

Even if I escaped into the air using Blink and Talaria's Wings,

magic and arrows could still chase me down.

I might be able to make an escape, but there was no need to fight them while facing such dangers.

If I excluded the plains then there were still 3 remaining battlefields.

The inner castle, the city itself, and those forts.

I turn my head to look at the signal fire burning brightly.

And on the plains, I could see 20 to 30 horsemen riding at an incredible speed.

Let's delay fighting in the city for now.

My best place for battle were these forts.

The gates were shut, and without siege equipments these goblins would have a hard time scaling the walls.

Lets burn the signal fires myself and whittle down their numbers as they tried to retake the fort.

Even if everyone in the city were goblins, not all of them would be soldiers.

If anything happens, I could just run into the mountains and ambush another fort and repeat my process.

Let's lower the number of their soldiers and when the goblins either gave up on the 4 forts or when their number of soldiers dwindled, only then would I infiltrate into the city.

While hidden in the city, I would perform arson and wreak confusion within the walls and lower their numbers again.

And in the confusion I could go for the king within the inner castle.

Step by step.

Alright, it was the perfect plan.

The horsemen had already crossed the plains and began to climb halfway up the mountain.

Time to welcome them.

I chucked a few more wood to make sure the fire burned and stood up.

Chapter 40 - Tutorial 4th Floor (6)

[Round 3, Day 17, 21:20]

"Kieek. Kyaa."

I stared at the goblin who was making those annoying sounds while blood was coming out from his mouth.

What was it trying to say?

Actually, did those shrieks even have any meaning to them?

Putting their appearance, fortress and city into consideration, their civilization's development was quite significant.

It was at least at the level of early medieval period.

And they would most likely had a language.

Well, it didn't matter, since I couldn't understand it.

But, just because I couldn't understand their words, didn't mean that I couldn't figure out what it was trying to say.

This goblin who seemed like the leader of this pack began shouting as soon as it seemed like this was a lost battle.

At that moment, some of the pack left the formation and retreated back to the city.

Most likely it was an order for retreat.

Seeing how only some of them left instead of the entire group, it might have been an attempt to send information about me rather than survival.

Meanwhile, the leader continued fight against me until the end to buy time.

A worthy opponent.

Such sense of responsibility was coming from a monster.

I wish some of the humans would learn from his example.

This leader goblin even had some skill under his belt too.

He could have been a nice match against the instructors.

Not against me though.

[Talaria's Wings]

I leapt off the fortress's walls with my wings spread wide.

The goblin leader tried his best to ensure their survival, but sadly it was all for naught.

It would take at least half a day to reach the city from here.

Plus, some of them were already injured.

Their probability of escaping from me and reaching the city was zero.

Hua.

How refreshing.

I was hoping I could fly through the clear blue sky one day when I had entered the 4th Floor.

And now my wish had come true.

Ah, it was night time right now.

There may not be any sun, but flying under the stars under the illumination of moonlight had its own charm.

Anyways, flying was the best!

Sometimes I got the urge to just fly for the entire day.

Humans since the olden days, dreamt of flying in the air.

With the introduction of airplanes and the improvement of technology, the dream had been reached somewhat.

But, wasn't I be the first HUMAN to fly in the sky with my own wings?

Ah, I pitied the humans who didn't know the magnificence of having wings.

I could see the back of the running goblins from the distance.

I had caught up to them.

These last 3 days, I had continued using my guerrilla tactics against the goblins.

Against the battalions trying to reclaim the fortress to be accurate.

With the signal fire continuing to burn, the goblins sent men

after men to recapture the fortress.

First it was 20.

Then 30.

Then 50.

Their numbers had increased each time, along with their strength and equipment.

And when the number had come close to a 100, I gave up on the fortress and ran.

I spread my wings, and glided towards another fortress to take over it.

It only took 3 hours for me to travel from one fortress to another.

But, the men who were sent were mostly cavalry and could not travel in a straight line between the fortresses.

They had to go back to the city and use the roads on the plains to reach the other fortresses.

It took one day for all this to happen.

They couldn't beat me in terms of mobility.

I was thinking of those swordmasters that often appeared in fantasy novels.

Superhumans who had enough strength to be considered a walking strategic weapon.

Their greatest weapon was that they had the power of an entire army in a single body.

I was using that strength to shake up the goblins as much as possible.

As soon as the army sent was larger than 100 men, I left the fortress without hesitation.

The goblins chased after me endlessly in futility.

They ran their horses with extreme fervor, but they couldn't achieve anything.

In the end, they had made the decision to send 200 men each to all 4 fortresses.

All of the men stationed in each fortresses were killed.

They had even sent 800 men to other fortresses just to catch me.

And, now.

One of the 4 armies have been defeated, hunted down to the last man, by me.

Hahahahah.

You thought that sending 200 would be enough since I ran when the numbers were over 100?

That was why you scaled the walls without any siege equipments to attack me.

If their aim was to chase me out and reclaim the fortress, it was a reasonable plan.

But with the walls on my side, I could take on 500 of them if I wanted to.

And to be honest, I could beat 200 even on equal footing.

I would have had trouble at the start of this boss room just fighting against 100 of them.

But repeating the process of goblin hunting and fortress

capturing had increased my level by 2.

An unbelievable increase.

It seemed that there was a huge reward associated with the concept of capturing the fortress itself.

A lot of my combat skills had improved, and the experience of fighting against many at the same time was valuable.

It had been only a week since the start of the boss room, but there was a significant difference between me back then and me right now.

I was starting to think if I should stay here to hunt the goblins longer instead of clearing the boss room, just for the growth.

If there were enough goblins, I might have taken that route.

For the last week, the goblins had been losing men left and right, and now they had decided to send 800 men at the same time.

It meant that there weren't many men left in the city.

This expedition was the result of the last week of guerrilla warfare.

Their forces were increasing in number for a time, until it began to drop quickly.

Their equipment and number of horses began to drop as well.

Now, there were many men who hadn't been trained properly among their forces.

They were the same goblin soldiers, but I could see that they were lacking in terms of skill.

It seemed like they had just given a spear to a civilian and sent them out to fight.

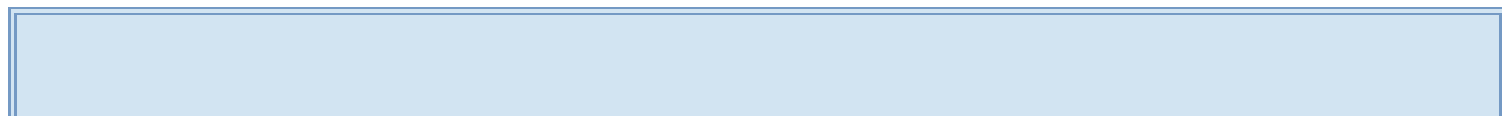
And, the number of those weaklings were getting higher and higher.

Their ratio was now 1:5, with 5 being the number of weaklings.

That force of 800 was made by literally scraping the bottom of the barrel.

It was not a bad feeling.

I felt like I had become a great strategist like Zhuge Liang.



[The God of Duel is disappointed by your unfair actions]

What did you want then?

Did you think having a nice lethal brawl out in the open against THAT number is fair?

I had no regrets at my methods nor my results.

[The God of Chaos is satisfied by your actions]

There were other gods who were happy as well.

Although it left a bad taste as he seemed like an evil one.

Now, I should take care of the remainders and fly to the city itself.

Time for a raid.

I'll show you the meaning of terrorism at the main base.

It was not difficult to scale the walls and infiltrate the city.

I just had to raise my altitude and fly above the clouds.

The problem was what happened afterwards.

After reaching safely inside the city, I landed on one of the roofs and scouted the city.

To see the difference between looking from high above the skies and mountains and looking from down below and decide where I should start.

Afterwards, I couldn't leave the roof for the next 2 hours.

I had already made a plan in my head.

How to make chaos as effectively as possible.

It was a given.

I had been continuously thinking of these methods in the last week during my battles.

A frontal assault was one way to go.

When the guards come chasing, I could leave and raid another

place.

I would be using my superior mobility.

The same tactics I had used before.

Making fires here and there was also good.

Firefighters in the city wouldn't be able to keep up with fires all over the city that were being made by someone.

Their guards would have to leave their posts, and chaos would follow.

Exploding any gunpowder would also be good too.

Creating chaos like that was all I need.

If I repeated it enough times, I could force them into disarray.

It didn't matter if too much time passed and all the men sent out to the fortresses came back.

I could just hide in the alleyways or run back to the fortress.

And then just rinse and repeat.

Their armies would not respawn like in the games.

I had confirmed that with the combat in the last week.

They didn't have many men to spare.

The 800, no 600 men they had sent was all they had.

If I succeeded in shaking down the city enough, I could easily go for the king before the army came back.

But I couldn't do that.

The goblin was laughing

The goblin child was laughing.

Grabbing onto what seemed like its mother with one hand and a bag full of ingredients in another.

It was continuously talking away, full of joy.

That restaurant building was filled with goblins.

Seems like the business was good.

I could see what seemed like a couple sitting by the windows.

They would occasionally stare at each other and snicker away, no idea what was making them laugh so much.

The goblins had feelings.

They had a life in this city.

They were not monsters in this city.

At first it was just curiosity.

I haven't had contact with such a normal life for too long.

In the Tutorial and my room in real life.

So I just watched.

It was a mistake.

Their life held their dreams and their pasts.

Their life was real, a product of their past continuing into the present.

Was this really just an illusion?

An illusion just to show this moment to me?

I remembered one of the theories I had thought of.

Maybe, this place existed within the universe, and I was just being teleported into the world following the instructions from the messages.

Haah.

My head was starting to ache.

I suddenly thought about the Representative Confederation.

They seemed passive, but some of the rankers and I had been continuing our investigation.

We had somewhat of an idea on what they were doing, although there hadn't been any evidence.

Let's compare these goblins with them.

Compared to those assholes, these goblins were much more human.

Actually, was calling them 'human' even the right term?

They were not monsters.

The monster was me.

What else could I be to them?

I suddenly appeared one day, only to assault the fortresses and kill the goblins.

Now I'm trying to cause chaos within the city.

I thought back to the first goblin leader I had met at the eastern fortress.

What had he said, just before he died?

Countless goblins I had met in the fortresses, on the plains, and in the mountains.

Countless goblins I had killed.

None of them had died quietly like monsters in a game.

They had tried their hardest to live, as long as, they could breathe.

The goblin that had held hatred in its eyes at its last moment, the goblin that had charged at me with madness his eyes, the goblin that had shouted in agony, the goblin that had tried to limp away to safety, the goblin that had screamed as he held onto a corpse.

I had just found their appearance amazing.

Like watching a really polished game and getting all the details right.

I feel like I had become the villain of a fairy tale.

These feelings would not settle down, and continued to tangle up inside me.

[Round 3, Day 21, 23:10]

As the world began to darken, the number of goblins on the streets dwindled.

And deep in the night, there was not a single goblin on the

streets.

I guess it was time for bed.

Watching the dark and empty streets showing their everyday life even more clearly to me.

... I couldn't stay on this roof for all my time.

This may sound selfish, actually it was selfish.

Hell, when wasn't I selfish?

But I had a job to do, things I desired.

Shit, maybe I had become too soft.

I hadn't seen other people in so long.

They were just an illusion.

No matter how many I killed, they would reappear once I went back to the Waiting Room.

If I failed to beat this floor, and came back to this boss room, they would be the back same as ever.

Would that really be the case?

I slowly stood up.

My back and hip felt sore.

Just how many hours had I spent sitting on this roof.

The feelings in my head hadn't settled down.

It wouldn't be for very long.

Let's just finish what I was here for.

Not endlessly tackling at an unsolvable issue, I jumped off the roof with my wings spread wide.

Let's just skip creating chaos in the city for now.

I don't think I could do it with my current state of mind, and I think it would get worse if I tried to anyways.

There was still some time until the expedition forces came back.

Actually, they may not come back in order to defend the fortress.

Let's go to the inner castle.

Let's find that goblin king, and leave this place.

As expected, there weren't many guards inside the inner castle.

The only problem was where do I find that king.

I guess I could go for the fanciest building from above.

Flying around the castle, I found out where that was.

The fancy building at the centre of the castle, fulfilled all my conditions.

All the windows of this building were blocked.

It seemed crude, showing how recently it was done.

And just by looking at it felt like there was someone important living in this place.

The design of this building was different from everything else.

All the walls and guard towers were positioned to surround that

building in the centre.

I was confident.

It was there.

I lowered the altitude, toward one of the windows that was blocked with wooden boards.

I will just break through that pathetic fortification.

Surrounding myself with Talaria's Wings, I flew into the building like a bullet.

Chapter 41 - Tutorial 4th Floor (7)

I broke the window that was blocked by the wooden plates and then entered the building. What I saw as soon as I entered the building was...

There were goblins with shocked eyes staring at me.

Making a guess based on their get-up...

Bingo...

It seemed the runt over there was the king.

The king was wearing extravagant clothes woven from red silk. It had a small crown on its head. It was an old goblin.

There were a total of four goblins in the room.

Two warriors, one shaman, and the king.

It seemed the king was at a bit of distance from combat.

The king was the goal of the boss room. Considering that, I was thinking he would be the strongest of them all. However...

Instead, the king was standing behind the other three goblins.

Appearance wise alone, the two warrior goblins looked pretty powerful.

I thought they might be even more powerful than the instructor goblins.

I wondered if these runts had skills.

If this was any other day, I would have calculated all sorts of things and tried to handle their attacks. However, right now, I just wanted to finish this boss room and go back to the waiting room.

I decided to go with a sure-kill move from the start.

I opened the Talaria's Wings and spread them wide horizontally, and then...

[Blink]

I reached just right in front of the king using Blink.

The warriors and shaman that was in my path were hit by Talaria's Wings and got pushed and thrown off to the back.

With cracking sounds, it sounded like they even broke the

furniture around the back and rolled to the wall.

After that, none of them were able to get back up.

The sudden movement from Blink had concussive power.

Also, from a common sense stand point, considering the hardness and weight of the Wings of Talaria, those goblins couldn't possibly get up like nothing happened.

The combination of Blink and Talaria's Wings was my one shot kill move for a reason.

Talaria's Wings was not directly connected to my muscles or nerves. However, it was connected indirectly at about one hand length away from my back, fixated in mid-air.

To put it simply, if the wings were pushed, my body was going to get propelled as well.

Because of this, the method was something that should not be used against an opponent with mass that was able to withstand the impact from the collision.

If the attack were to get blocked then the knockback from it was going to hit me indirectly, immediately leaving me defenseless.

However, against opponents like goblins, which had similar mass

as humans, this combination attack was sufficiently effective as a sure-kill move.

With his guards thrown off to the back at an instant, the goblin king showed an unexpected behavior.

I thought it would charge at me out of desperation or run away in fear. However, instead, the king unexpectedly came to me and faced me. It started to say kaek kaek, trying to talk to me.

“Kiiiaak. Kire Kiruk Kiruk.”

‘I am sorry, but I don’t understand you.’

I quietly raised my sword as the response.

However, the goblin king’s behavior did not change.

Its eyes were calm. They did not shake. I could not find anxiety or fear in its eyes.

‘What is it thinking? What is it trying to tell me? As a reward for not making it bothersome by resisting... No. This is not it.’

To respect the king goblin for keeping its honor and not taking any shameful action, I decided to kill it in a clean, swift way.

I grabbed the king goblin's shoulder, pressed the tip of my sword at its heart, and pushed it in.

By the sword being thrust in with strength, the edge of the sword pierced to the heart without much resistance.

... The end.

The old goblin king slowly collapsed to the floor like a leaf falling in the air.

Right at the moment before its last breath, the goblin king's eyes, which had been steadily staring at me straight, turned to somewhere else.

I wondered if he had a hidden triumph card up his sleeve, so I looked at the end of where its gaze was directed.

It was a highly decorated table.

A decorative table cloth was flowing below the table, and there were child goblins wearing ornate clothes.

He was hiding child goblins there.

Maybe the things that the goblin king was talking about before it died included something about those children.

Ah, my eyes met with one of them.

My eyes ended up meeting with one of the child goblins that were hiding under the table.

The child goblin was very surprised and twitched.

It seemed its body hit something on the table. There was a small noise.

Silence was flowing in the air for a moment. Of the children under the table, the one that appeared to be the biggest one walked out of the table by itself.

‘What the... It should stay in hiding. Why is it coming out? Ah, since it was found out, it must be thinking it is dead now. I don’t really have any intention of killing you too.’

The little goblin started to talk to me.

It seemed goblins had a tendency to say their last will to the opponent before dying.

However, there was a difference between this little goblin and the king goblin.

Unlike the king goblin, this little goblin was in tears with bloodshot eyes and screaming as if it was trying to make the room

flood in its scream.

‘I don’t understand what you are saying, but I think I roughly get what you are saying.’

It was a foreign language I heard for the first time, but they said you could understand curses when you hear one. I realized it really was like that.

[You cleared tutorial, Hell difficulty, fourth floor]

[All of your status abnormalities and injuries will be recovered.]

[As a reward for clearing the floor, you obtained 1000 points.]

[As a reward for achieving the best clear, you obtained 1000 points.]

[There are many gods showing positive responses to you. You obtained 6300 points.]

[There are many gods showing negative responses to you. You obtained 1700 points.]

[Based on your play records, you are assigned additional reward.]

[Many gods would like to give you a special skill instead of an additional reward.]

[Vote result: 12 yes, 7 no]

[Would you like to accept it?]

Instead of authority, it seemed they could gift skills as well.

‘They even took votes amongst themselves. How democratic.’

I accepted it.

[You acquired the knowledge of the time before Babel, Lv. 5]

Knowledge of the time before Babel...

I was able to tell the effect of this skill immediately.

I was starting to understand what the child goblin in front of me was screaming on top of its lung.

[The gods will definitely send punishment to you! You monster!]

To my ears, the goblin's words still only sounded like beastly roar. However, despite that, its meaning was conveyed to me so clearly.

A portal magic circle appeared a few steps in front of me.

However, I couldn't bring myself to walk.

The child goblin was still screaming at me. It said that I was violent and cruel, and that was the reason why I was born with hideous and pasty face.

To the little goblin, I wanted to say something back for myself. That was the reason.

I wanted to tell it that this was not my fault.

I wanted to tell it that I did not have any intention of killing them in the first place, and I was also a victim.

I wanted to tell it that I was dragged to the Tutorial, and I'm merely forcing myself to overcome this hardship.

I wanted to tell it that the message ordered me to kill them, and...

It is you guys that are ugly, not me.

However, I didn't actually tell them.

I just listened to the little goblin shouting curses of anguish and reflected on the excuses that I thought about.

‘That’s just an illusion?’

I lifted my head as I thought about the suspicion I had since I entered the fourth floor’s boss room.

‘All that hatred, anger, and fury... Am I supposed to just believe that those are nothing but illusions?’

Now, the little goblin was strongly defending and saying how great and magnificent king its father was, and it told me what a disgusting monster I was for slaughtering its father and the subjects.

It was as if it was intending to die while screaming. If this little goblin, which was desperately screaming, was not fake...

‘If it is not fake? Then I...’

[God of Adventure is blinding your eyes.]

[God of Slowness is furious.]

I felt an invisible something covering my eyes.

At that instant, my vision was completely covered.

When my vision, which was painted black, was brightened again...

I was standing on a green field.

The field looked peaceful and beautiful as always. Along with the scenery, I could see Kiri Kiri.

‘How could this be...’

“Kiri Kiri”

I called her name and took a step forward.

When I did, Kiri Kiri took steps back with a stiff look on her face.

“Are you pissed off?”

“No. I’m not pissed off.”

“Hing... I’m sorry.”

“I said I’m not pissed off.”

“You are pissed off. I am sorry.”

Not pissed off...

To begin with, it was fault of the one with the blood painted all over the body and wielding a sword with blood and flesh stuck on it. It was the fault of the one who decided to approach in that state.

I wasn’t going to be pissed off for someone taking steps back in that situation.

Although, I was shocked a little at the moment.

“Howujae is angry because of me. What should I do...”

‘It is more unpleasant for me to hear you call my name all stretched out like that.’

My head was feeling complicated with thoughts, but it was not because of Kiri Kiri.

[God of Adventure is blinding your eyes.]

After seeing that message, my sight turned black, and I was transported to this field.

To think a god was capable of demonstrating this kind of physical control...

Anyway...

I remembered how I complained and belittled the God of Adventure, and that made me a little anxious.

‘Let’s set aside the question of how for now. Instead, why? Why did God of Adventure do this? Also, why did the God of Slowness get infuriated? Um... It is not like I could possibly know...’

“Kiri Kiri, if I also count the questions I saved and did not ask you last time, I should be able to hear quite a lot of information this time, right?”

“Yep! You can.”

“In that case, can you explain to me... about the gods? Make it as much as possible about the gods that are related to me, or give me information that I need.”

It was a vague and none-specific question. Kiri Kiri agonized over what to tell him for a long time.

After a while, as if she organized the thoughts to some extent, she started to explain little by little.

“The gods are taking interests in you mostly because they are watching you to see if you have the qualification to be their apostle.”

‘Apostle, that’s a new concept that just popped up.’

“It is hard to earn gods’ interests. Becoming their apostle is even harder. You need to satisfy a condition that is not made known.”

Her sentence was getting shorter.

‘Could it be that more detailed the sentence, the allocation amount for the information becomes smaller faster?’

I kept my mouth shut for now and continued to listen.

“You are extraordinary. A decision needs to be made someday.”

It seemed a decision had to be made about something.

‘Is she talking about me becoming their apostle? Of the gods of vengeance that want me to be their apostle, do I need to choose one?’

Kiri Kiri suddenly crunched down and sat there. On the dirt, she started to draw long lines using her hand.

‘Is she counting something?’

“I’ll explain a little about the God of Slowness.”

“God of Slowness.”

“God of Slowness... Her title does not mean simple slow movements of objects or living beings. She is the one who follows the infinitely continuing passage of time for eternity without ever faltering.”

‘I think a bit about the God of Slowness’s front and back were omitted there. With just that explanation...’

“Like a seeker of truth...”

“Oh my... I should not have said those words.”

‘It seems like she at least got the main point right. God of Slowness... No, just gods in general... I don’t know what kind of being they are or what they are up to, but I think I get a little bit about the concept of the God of Slowness.’

Her title did not mean slowness of movement.

‘Now that I think about it, if the meaning of her title was limited to just the speed of the movement, she could not have the authority over Blink, which is a cheat-like movement skill.’

“In that case, what about the God of Adventure?”

“Can’t do. You used up all of information allowance.”

‘I used all of the allowances, which are two floors worth? Information about Gods are scary expensive.’

“It’s fine. Well then, just help me switch my weapon.”

“Ok!”

*

[Punisher’s Handgun]

Attack power: 4~41

Description: It is a handgun that generates powerful explosion by combining gunpowder with magic. It gets destroyed after being used five times.

It was a weapon that looked like a handgun.

One thing different about it was that, instead of firing bullets, it caused explosion nearby.

Kiri Kiri said it will be needed in beating the fifth floor, so I purchased without giving it much thought.

Sadly, it had the limit of five shots, so it looked like I was not going to be able to try it out for a test.

[Gladius that was blessed by a nameless god]

Attack power: 11

Description: It is a very sturdy short sword that was blessed by a nameless god who is being forgotten by the people.

Additional attribute: As a part of the effect of the god's blessing, unless the user wants it, the handle will not slip from

the user's hand.

I have never seen such a small, specific yet practical blessing by a god before. Actually, with increase in strength stat, because my grip got stronger, I probably did not need to worry about the sword shaking from the handle slipping.

Still, additional stability in the grip was definitely a plus.

The fact that it said it won't stay in effect unless the user wants it was also great.

I did not need to worry about the blessing hindering the movement unnecessarily when I want to reverse the grip.

It was a short, double-edged sword that was about two feet in length. It looked just like the one I had been using. I purchased this one because I was used to this kind of weapon from having used it until now.

[A blood-soaked backsword of a savage warrior]

Attack power: 14

Description: The samshir that Warg Rider, the greatest in the history, used to use in his life.

Additional attribute: Magic or shamanic sorcery type reinforcement effect cannot be applied.

I had no idea what a samshir was, but judging from the description, it seemed it was a single-edge sword for use while riding on a horse.

I wondered if a weapon used while riding on a warg counted as such, but I decided not to ask such a question for now.

At the moment, I didn't even know what a warg rider meant.

One noticeable characteristic of this sword was that it was over three times longer than Gladius.

The sword was thick, and it even felt heavy.

Despite that, looking at the handle, it was definitely a one-handed sword.

Usually, a one-handed sword for horseback riding had the special characteristic of being light. However, this one was so heavy that an ordinary person would have struggled to hold even with two hands.

I knew something was up just from the mention of warg or

whatever, but it seemed this sword was not meant to be used by a human being.

Of course, with my muscular strength, I could use it without straining myself.

‘I have the speed that is superior to my opponents, and I have a cheat-like movement technique called Blink. I’m carrying out my battles with those, so I think a horseback riding type sword, which is mainly for cutting, could be useful.’

Moreover, ever since I entered the fourth floor, I had been disappointed about lack of heavy weaponry all along.

My hands were not yet used to this one, but since this one had special characteristics that were different from Gladius, I figured it would be helpful during the battles.

Also, I had a need for handling different types of swords for the sake of growing my swordsmanship skill.

As for the additional attributes, it seemed it was talking about blessing or enchant effects common in video games.

I didn’t know how to use any blessing or enchantment anyway, so it was irrelevant.

[Sturdy round iron shield]

Defensive power: 10

Description: It is sturdy. It has a rich, classy decoration engraved on it. It is an used item.

... I did not have enough points.

I had so much points, but I used it all purchasing two swords and a handgun.

They were worth the expensive price, but...

Compulsive shopping was scary like this.

I ended up just handing over my wallet whenever Kiri Kiri stood next to me and said “That’s right! This one is incredibly good! It is a perfect weapon for you!”

‘As for the shield, I’ll collect points and replace it next time...’

“Well then, thank you for your good work, Kiri Kiri. Let’s see each other again next time.”

Now that I purchased new equipment, it was time for me to move again.

I was heading to the portal, and Kiri Kiri waved her hand.

“Um! Cheer up! Good bye! Don’t worry too much!”

‘Is she worrying for me after all?’

I was certain she was going to wave her hand and ask me to buy a cake for her, but to my surprise, she gave me words of encouragement.

“You have to buy me a cake next time!”

‘Haha. I was wondering why she didn’t say that.’

This time, because I used all of my points while purchasing equipment, I was not able to buy a cake for her.

I thought to myself that I would definitely buy a cake for her next time. I waved my hand toward Kiri Kiri back at her.

Chapter 42 - Tutorial 5th Floor (1)

[What kind of items did Kirikiri recommend to you?]

[A handgun, some kind of spray type repellent, smoke bomb marbles, and rapid elixir.]

[... That's quite a few. For now, follow her recommendations and purchase them.]

[If I do, I'll end up using all of the points that you sent me.]

[I'll send you more points.]

[All right. By the way, that... Mister... You told me before that I should not rely too much on items, so...]

[The thing is, the boss room on fifth floor is quite tough, so...]

*

I was at the fifth floor's waiting room.

I was already at the fifth floor.

It had been a while since I thought about what happened in the waiting room at the first floor.

I was anxious and scared, but it was fun in a way.

‘The four people who were in the waiting room with me... What were their names?’

Compared to the waiting room at the first floor, the fifth floor’s waiting room was really wide.

If I was to describe the first floor’s waiting room as a large living room size, then the fifth floor’s waiting room was about the size of an indoor basketball court.

Maybe it was because the waiting room got bigger. This space felt even lonelier.

‘Now, what should I do? For now, I’ll definitely be going to the fifth floor. Before I do, I think I should organize my thoughts a little, but...

Perhaps it is not a bad idea to just go on with the Tutorial first without organizing my thoughts.

Um... I think I should organize my thoughts first. It is not good to leave it be when feeling leery.’

I thought about the questions that I had when I was in the fourth floor.

I wondered if the goblins were not illusions.

The goblins I faced were not smelly and savagery monsters usually portrayed in the media.

They had society, and they had family.

Not just that, they had emotions, morals, relationships, technology, and even hierarchy.

The only difference to humans was their hideous appearances.

‘If I think of them as intelligent beings instead of simple subject of hunting... and if they are not just illusions...’

That meant what I have done at the fourth floor could be defined as murder.

‘What should I do...’

For now, since this was Tutorial, I decided to set aside things like boss room.

Attacking them and murdering them were my own conscious decisions.

Even if I looked for the reason for my actions in the system, all that would come from trying was the fact that I'm living like someone's puppet.

‘Let's try and think about the reason why I hurt them.

Because they attacked me?

That wasn't it.

Goblins were always primarily focused in defense.

They fought to chase me away.

It was like that starting with the goblin instructor that I met first after entering the Fourth Floor.

They did not attack me unless I got closer than a certain limit.

Even after that, the goblins that appeared had either trenches or raised wooden fences to focus on standing ground and defense.

In in the boss room, they just wanted to protect their city and the fortress.

I was the one that started, continued, and finished the fight.

I hurt them to clear the Tutorial.

They were like gated doors blocking my path.

So, I killed them and moved forward.

I could not afford to stop here, for them.

‘Let’s assume there is a goblin in front of me again.

If there is a path beyond that goblin that I need to go to, would I kill that goblin and move forward?’

The answer was... Yes.

I was not here and doing this grunt work to simply beat the Tutorial and win some prize.

I have heard that, in the outside world of Tutorial, there were countless people dying right at this moment because of monsters that appeared.

Clearing the Tutorial was going to help those people.

I was certain of it.

The hundredth floor of the Tutorial...

By the time I cleared the hundredth floor, I would be possessing the power that rivaled Superman.

I didn't have some grandiose thoughts about needing to save the humanity. It was just that there were my family and friends in the outside world.

I was just worried about them.

Also, I could return only if I beat the Tutorial.

Both of my reasons were very clear.

As long as I had a reason to not stop and continue moving forward, I was not going to hesitate attacking them.

To start with, goblins and I were enemies.

It was just that I attacked first. There was no way for co-existence and cooperation with them.

This was no different from my days as a professional gamer.

The winner took everything.

It was just that this time, my life was also added and hanging on

the balance of victory and defeat.

Whether it was the opponents or myself, whichever side that lost the fight was going to be killed. It was fair.

I could not afford to hesitate.

A moment of hesitation could become danger at a critical moment.

Not just for the sake of moving forward, but also for the sake of growing stronger faster, I could not afford to hesitate in killing them.

‘Talking about it like that sounds like an archetypical psychopath’s monologue. Saying I will not hesitate to attack anyone who gets in my way...’

I should not forget about them at least.

I should not give up agonizing about this.

I organized my thoughts... No. It did not feel like it was organized. Still...

I have decided.

I should continue to think hard about this.

Although Kirikiri said I should not agonize too much, that was because she was worried I might get buried under it beyond a certain extent.

This was not something that could be solved easily, and it was not a problem with a definite solution either.

It was not a light problem that could just pass by either.

Still, it was not the kind of problem that I should just give up and keep it buried.

It was going to be a task that I was going to shoulder and go on for a very long time.

Just... I was not going to think about it for long or too deeply.

I was going to keep myself from struggling with the thoughts.

I'll think and ponder about it frequently.

I had plenty of time.

‘However, this is it for now.

It is time for me to stop thinking and move.

First, I should check the status window and community.'

“Status Window”

[Lee Ho-jae (human)]

Lv. 10

Strength: 24

Dexterity: 39

Vitality: 28

Mana: 28

Skill: Battle Focus Lv.11 Willpower Lv.5 Awakening Lv.1 Night Vision Lv.2 Bright Vision Lv.1 Charge Lv.2 Sneak Lv.4 Natural Regeneration Lv.2 Improved Senses Lv.7 Increased Field of Vision Lv.1 Toughened Skin Lv.3 Basic Swordsmanship Lv.6 Basic Shield Skill Lv.4 Basic Hand to Hand Skill Lv.3 Basic Throwing Skill Lv.1 Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv.2 Knowledge of the Time before Babel Lv.5 Mind Corruption Immunity Lv.1 Pain Resistance Lv.11 Bleed Resistance Lv.4 Faint Resistance Lv.3 Pierce Resistance Lv.2 Poison resistance Lv.4 Paralysis

Resistance Lv.6 Heat Resistance Lv.4 Burn Resistance Lv.7 Cold Resistance Lv.4 Frostbite Resistance Lv.3 Blink Emblem Lv.Max Talaria's Wings Lv.Max

Extra: God of Slowness is watching you with a satisfied look.

After entering the fourth floor's boss room, I gained two levels, which was incredible.

Thinking about how level ups had been going recently, this was an unbelievable growth.

If I intentionally failed to clear the boss room at the fourth floor and challenged it again, I might have been able to increase the level some more.

Besides the level, there were other things that changed in comparison to before I entered the fourth floor's boss room. They were increases in my stats and combat skills.

Sadly, innate skills did not improve at all.

I remembered seeing the message about the God of Slowness being infuriated, but it was not shown here.

'If that is not the case, then is she infuriated at someone else? That is possible.'

“Community.”

While I was looking around to see if there was any new information, a 1:1 invitation message arrived.

[Lee Ho-jae, Fifth Floor: What is it?]

[Kim Min-huk, Fourth Floor: ... Hey, when did you get all the way to the fifth floor?]

[Lee Ho-jae, Fifth Floor: I just got here.]

[Kim Min-huk, Fourth Floor: You are really something. Other people cannot even reach the second floor in Hell difficulty, yet... Even in Hard difficulty, guys are complaining because they cannot break through the third floor.]

[Lee Ho-jae, fifth floor: Well, I was lucky.]

I really was lucky.

Gods have taken interest in me early, so I had plenty of points to spend.

‘Thanks to that, I was able to get past the second floor alive.’

After that, I obtained the authority skills.

Not just one, but two.

‘Without authority skills, I would not have gotten to the fifth floor already. I would have been busy grinding away at the third floor or the beginning of the fourth floor, trying to increase my skill levels.’

I looked at the information circulating in the community, and God’s authority skills were not mentioned at all.

It seemed Gods have taken interest in some of the rankers, but that information was also almost not released.

Of course, I didn’t release the information about the authority skills either.

Community was open to all challengers.

I had no competitors, and actually, I was the only one in the Hell difficulty. Still...

It was no good to release information indiscriminately.

‘Releasing the information may have no effect on me, but it could have a big effect on someone else.’

[Lee Ho-jae, Fifth Floor: By the way, why did you contact me?]

[Kim Min-huk, Fourth Floor: I think there is a pawn among the rankers.]

I suddenly had a blank look on my face.

Something happened that I never thought of.

[Lee Ho-jae, Fifth Floor: A ranker is? Why? For what?]

[Kim Min-huk, Fourth Floor: How should I know? I'm not sure about this anyway. For now, I'll try to go find out more.]

[Lee Ho-jae, Fifth Floor: All right. Is there anything in particular that I need to do?]

[Kim Min-huk, Fourth Floor: At the moment, we don't know who the pawn is. So, don't tell others information about the day of harmony, although the information about that might have already been handed over to the other side.]

‘If someone among the rankers is exchanging messages with the other side, the information about the day of great harmony definitely went over to the other side. The most frequently talked about topic among the rankers recently was the day of the great harmony, so...’

Until now, we have obtained more information about the great harmony from the managers, things like its date, special attributes of the day, matter of forced participation, and more.

I had to assume that the entire information was handed over to the other side.

[Lee Ho-jae, Fifth Floor: I got it. Keep up the good work.]

I closed the message and community windows.

‘Is there a reason why a ranker would join hands with the Representative Union? Is there any?’

Damn it.’

Sigh came out of me on its own.

The Representative Union obtained information about the day of great harmony. Also, they turned one of the rankers.

‘What would change due to these facts? I am not sure? Unless the name of the turned ranker is Lee Ho-jae, I don’t think this changes anything.’

Actually, the timing was good.

Thanks to the boss room at the fourth floor, currently, I had my resolve firmed.

I already made up my mind to not hesitate attacking enemies blocking my way.

A monster or human, regardless of which, there probably was not going to be any exception, especially if it was going to be a human who was worse than goblins.

*

[Kaaaaaaaaak-]

I used my shield to smack the smelly mouth of the lizardman and pierced its neck with my sword.

I haphazardly pushed aside the dying lizardman to the side and snatched the trident with my bare hand that was coming at me from beyond.

I tightened my grip on the hand that was holding the trident and confirmed the location of the lizardman that was charging toward me from the back.

[Talaria's Wings]

The wing spread wide open from my back, and the lizardman was

pierced by the wing and got thrown to the corner of the corridor wall.

I unhanded the trident I was holding on my right hand and used the Blink to get back.

“Kiiiiiiiiaak!”

These bastards occasionally used their tails as weapons, but they acted like they were in great pain when their tails were stepped on.

Actually, instead of being in pain, the response was more like their pride was stepped on.

The lizardman had a ‘Now I am totally mad!’ look on its face. It turned slowly. Looking at the lizardman, I drew the savage warrior’s single-edged sword.

[Battle Focus]

‘I am still not used to using the sword. Even if it is just to reflect upon the awkwardness in my movements, I think it would be best for me to use the Battle Focus when I use the single-edged sword and fight.’

The lizardman’s trident came at me in a thrust motion across from lower left.

It looked like it was going to be hard to approach the lizardman while dodging this.

I took a step back and parried the trident using the sword.

With the tip of the trident shaking, lizardman's defense was open. I used the Blink and approached its chest.

I just let go of the single-edged sword, drew the combat short sword and thrust it into the lizardman's chest.

It seemed it was struck right at the heart. Lizardman struggled for a moment and collapsed. It was not able to get up again.

'I'm still more used to using the short small sword. With a long, heavy weapon at my hand all of sudden, I can't quite get a feel for how to use it.'

I tried to mimick the movements of the goblin instructor that wielded an ax. However, that ax and this sword were different starting from the length.

There was also the difference in height between the goblin instructor and myself.

'I wish I had a teacher that could teach me. Well, it is just how things always had been. I have no choice but to master it myself.'



[Round 3, Day 26, 18:20]

It had been two days since I entered the fifth floor.

It was the lizardman that showed up here as the blockade.

As the name suggested, it was a man lizard.

Over seven feet tall, it was a little taller than goblins. It was muscular as if it was trying to say it should obviously be muscular.

Lizardmen usually showed up with long tridents. They had flexible bodies, and they had large and sturdy tails, which was their most notable characteristic.

One thing different from the goblins was that the lizardmen were very violent.

They came charging at me as soon as they saw me.

They kept coming until their deaths.

They did not rely on defensive structures like trenches or wooden fences. However, they were very offense oriented, and they had superior combat abilities, so it was significantly more difficult to fight them.

With flexibility, quick reflexes, and bravery combined into one, their combat abilities were at a whole another dimension from goblins.

However, I was not feeling threatened much.

I too had substantial growth at the fourth floor.

In particular, while I conquered the fortress repeatedly, my experience points blew up, so I leveled up continuously. The growth from that was too big.

‘I think perhaps that boss room was not the route for conquering the fortress. The difficulty at that place was so high that it would have been impossible without the authority skills.

Could it be that, just like at the third floor’s boss room, I cleared it through an odd route?

Um... Well, nothing bad came of it, so...

Thanks to it, clearing the fifth floor is easier.

Although, if I feel that the difficulty is too easy, then it is not appropriate for long term growth. Still...

If I think of this time period as the training for getting used to

properly utilizing the single-edged sword that I bought, it is not bad.

I'll just make that as my goal at the Fifth Floor, and once I accumulate mastery in using single-edged sword, I'll go up straight to the Sixth Floor.

I'll stop the conquest here for the day.

I'm going to go back to the waiting room now.

I need to eat, and I need to look at the community as well.

Soon, it is going to be the time for the Day of Great Harmony to start.'

*

[Round 3, Day 27, 00:00]

[The day of great harmony is commencing.]

[The day of great harmony will continue for the next 24 hours. Remaining time: 23h, 59m]

[Please enter. Time left until forced summoning: 5h]

Chapter 43 - The Day Of The Great Harmony

Of all the resistance skills, the one that was the easiest to raise was the burn resistance.

As for cold and heat, creating the environment for them itself was hard.

Moreover, cold and heat were most dangerous when they started to affect the nervous system and cause error in brain functions.

It seemed this was the reason why the demand for the resistance skill performance itself was a little high.

I was guessing that this was the reason why leveling it up was limited to four when I was at the second floor and doing repeated grinding.

Things like faint or paralysis resistance were also almost impossible to improve all by myself.

Grinding for resistance skills were done mostly at the waiting room or in front of the waiting room portal. Considering this fact, it really was impossible.

The only things left were pain, burn and frostbite.

My pain resistance level was already very high, so I was not

expecting much on its growth.

As for the frostbite resistance, I could grow it easily by applying freezing water on my body. However, with the passage of time, the freezing effect disappeared as the freezing water hardened.

Because of the limit on points, I could not raise the frostbite resistance any more.

So, in the end, all that was left was the burn resistance.

I could raise it easily with heat stone. Also, before the heat stone's heat withered, I could create fire on fabrics or woods. That way, I could continue the process with the fire.

As of result, my burn resistance became second highest level skill of all my resistance skills, second only to the pain resistance.

Even the burn resistance's growth became slower, so I ended up quitting the grinding for it.

Recently, I had been working on not the resistance skills but the power skills gifted to me by the gods. I had been using power skills by myself to work on getting used to them.

However, when it came to just killing time mindlessly, there was no other grinding that was as efficient as resistance skills.

It had been a while since I raised my burn resistance. Sitting in front of the waiting room's portal, I looked at the Community window as I fiddled with the heat stone.

Actually, I wanted to look at the Community window while I worked, so I decided to raise my resistance skill levels.

There were new messages coming up in almost every 10 seconds. This situation was...

It was pure chaos and destruction.

No, perhaps not exactly?

Regardless, there was a huge commotion.

It was not that something very bad in particular happened.

The Representative Federation, as usual, did not show up on the Community.

None of them did, not the members, not the victims.

In other words, the people causing ruckus in the Community right now were mostly people who were unrelated to the Representative Federation.

A few hours ago, one of the rankers leaked the information about the day of the great harmony on the Community.

There was not much time left before its commencement anyway.

Also, the opinion was that others should be informed with minimum knowledge about the event at least to minimize chaos. Because of this, the information leak was looked over without much complaints.

The excuse was that this was an accident.

However, from how I saw it, it seemed someone tossed the information to get attention.

Information about tutorial were mostly gathered from the managers.

Also, you could meet the managers after clearing a floor.

Because of these two conditions, knowing sweet information and telling people about it was a form of bragging.

Recently, people in the lower floor started to support rankers. As of result, fandoms and factions were starting to form.

Things like this happened occasionally.

It was similar to overdone fraternization and attention seeking in SNS.

‘Maybe the ranker that got turned to be the pawn of Representative Federation did it for the same reason? I am not sure.’

I could not get any more information about them.

Coming back to the topic of Community, with the information about the day of the great harmony released, the Community was in a state of festivity.

Round 3, Day 27...

There were many who already used up the 24 hour stay allowances at the waiting room.

The sense of security of being able to rest in a safe space, away from the stage and the constant danger...

In addition, with the rounds repeating, people could meet their comrades again at the waiting room, and you could even see the faceless people you had been chatting through the Community for the first time.

Finally, the day of the great harmony was a sort of peaceful event that happened for the first time since the Tutorial started.

While being thrown in the deadly and harsh environment of the Tutorial stages, people were either trying to clear the Tutorial or just survive 30 days and wait for the day they could go back to the waiting room. All of those people were overjoyed about the day of the great harmony.

Of course, I was not sure if the day would progress peacefully.

Regardless, looking at the excited Community, it was no different from kindergarteners causing ruckus the day before a fieldtrip out of anticipation, although they were liking it a little more than that.

I didn't bother with joining them in the excitement.

I just continued my work on improving my skill levels.

However, I kept on reading the Community.

Although they were just texts, I got to see people being swept away and acting happy in the atmosphere of festivities. It somehow made me a little excited and happy.

*

[Round 3, Day 27, 00:00]

[The day of the great harmony will now commence.]

[The day of great harmony will continue for the next 24 hours. Remaining time: 23h, 59m]

[Please enter. Time left until forced summoning: 5h]

‘Oh, it is finally here.’

As the information obtained by some ranker indicated, the message appeared on the Round 3, Day 27, 00:00.

The forced summoning was also there as the information indicated.

‘Is 5 hours just in case someone is in middle of clearing a Tutorial floor and needs to get out of dangerous area or clear it? Um... It must be the case.

The clear condition for the second floor’s boss room was surviving it for 3 hours.’

[Round 3, Day 27, 00:00]

The timer did not move from Day 27, 00:00.

‘Is the timer not going to move for the duration of the day of the great harmony?’

It seemed that this was done after considering possible negative effect for losing time that could be spent on fighting.

‘Looks like the system thought things through. Although there are bastards that try to exploit the loopholes despite that.’

Before I realized, there was a new portal near my feet.

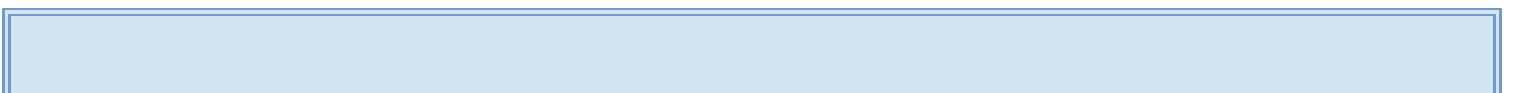
I walked around a little, and the portal followed me around.

‘Oh, I didn’t know a portal could move on its own like this. It is like having a puppy follow me around. This is fun.’

Enter.

I felt the floating sensation that I was used to. I closed my eyes for a moment.

When I opened my eyes, I could see a familiar field in front of me.



[Welcome to the place of the great harmony.]

[Remaining time: 23:58]

[In this place, you are restricted from attacking another.]

[All of your injuries will be healed automatically.]

‘Um... This place is Kiri Kiri’s green plain.’

I looked around, and now, there were quite a lot of people. They were mumbling.

I ignored them for now. I kept on looking around.

‘Is Kiri Kiri going to be the MC for the day?’

Thinking like that, I kept looking around to find Kiri Kiri, but I could not find her.

For some reason, I was disappointed.

Many people were happy, saying it had been a while since they got to see a bright, open field like this.

It seemed this was the reason why this place was selected for the day.

I could hear laughter from here and there. I actually felt surprised by such noise.

Many people...

Busy atmosphere...

Bright smiles and occasional faces with tears...

I could smell the scent of humanity here.

I could not recall how long it had been since I was in a place like this.

‘At least, at this very moment, as the title said, which read ‘the day of great harmony,’ people are all in harmony, crying and smiling.’

*

“Can I have your autograph?”

While I was looking around the field, I met a ranker who was

among the upper group in the normal difficulty.

It was Kim Min-huk, the one I had chatted a few times in Community.

He abruptly grabbed my hand and asked for a hand shake. I panicked a little.

“When you were a professional gamer, I was totally a fan. Why didn’t you tell me? If you did, you would not have been accused of suffering from being a fool with overactive imagination and a pathological liar.”

“It’s been a while since I retired from being a professional gamer, so...”

In the Community, we had not been using honorary form of language. It was for the sake of convenience back then. He was speaking freely in non-honorary language although we met in person. He was acting friendly, and it was awkward and unpleasant.

“Anyway, what about the other people?”

‘To be precise, what about other rankers? That is my question.’

Fortunately, Kim Min-huk understood what I was trying to get at.

“They are getting hold of other people and asking names. They are trying to find and secure them if victims from that side entered here.”

Besides talking to me once in a while, it seemed he introduced himself to people as a part of his work routine.

“Did you find anything?”

“No. That side and victims... Nothing came in from either sides. I think they are going to come over all at once when it is almost time for the end of the limit.”

Um... I could understand that.

For the Round Three, the 24 hour stay duration for the waiting room was long gone before yesterday evening.

Victims were probably in the Tutorial stages, each of them alone somewhere.

‘Is it possible for the Representative Federation to exercise control of this magnitude to all of the victims, especially when they are all separated from each other?’

“That is... It seems the second floor is pretty wide. If you think about this from those people’s perspective, when the Round Three

is over, they only have two choices. They can either go back to the first floor's waiting room or move up to the second floor.”

Ah...

“Even if they do not go back by clearing the Tutorial, they can run in to the Federation at the second floor, so I think they are just trying to survive through it. We also told them to just do that.”

‘Ugh, oh my... I am at a loss for words.’

I felt leery, so I was clicking my tongue. It was at that moment. A large group came in a swarm. It was the rankers.

“Did you guys find anything?”

“No. There wasn't anyone. Not even one person.”

There were five rankers in total.

They made simple introduction with six people and started to chat.

They were mostly junks about the old days as professional gamers or hot topics since they entered Tutorial.

Talking about Representative Federation was consciously

avoided.

‘I don’t know which one of these guys are the other side’s pawn. This is inconvenient in many ways. Not just among the rankers, but there must be pawns amongst the ordinary challengers as well.’

For now, I let them continue talking about useless things. I stepped away a bit and brought out a knife.

‘The system message clearly said it will be impossible to attack another person in here. In that case, what if I attacked myself?’

I thrust the knife’s edge into my palm.

I did it with enough force to pierce through my palm, but the knife slipped away on the top of the palm as if it was just passing by.

‘I can’t attack myself either.

Um... How does this work?’

I tried placing the knife’s edge on my palm again, and I moved the knife as if I was sawing.

‘It feels like a very fine layer is surrounding my entire body. It is so fine that it is to the point of being difficult to notice. Perhaps I

can think of it as an ultra performance super micro full body bullet-proof, sword-proof suit?’

As I continued the sawing motion, eventually, the skin was cut a little, and there was blood.

Also, the injury was healed.

‘It looks like getting injured from a sharp edge is going to be difficult. There is the full recovery effect like the one from the waiting room, and it is like the protective effect is also added to it.’

I put the knife away. Instead, I tried smacking the palm with my fist.

‘... I don’t feel much pain.’

This was separate from my pain resistance.

I really could feel almost no pain from it.

I just felt that something was smashed to my palm with a great force.

Puk!

Again, I smacked my palm with my fist hard.

Despite that, I could only feel slight pain, the kind felt from tightly massaging my hand.

One thing fortunate about this was that the minimum momentum from the impact was still in effect.

Striking something hard resulted in that something being pushed.

‘I think joint-based attacks would still work.’

I slowly raised my hand and tried slowly choking my neck.

My breathing was blocked, and I slowly felt light headed.

After that...

My hand was bounced off from my neck.

It felt like something invisible struck it away by force.

My brain, which was struggling due to lack of oxygen, came back to normal at an instant.

Although choking worked, something restrained me from continuing when it went far enough to endanger my life.

It looked like twisting joints would have the same results.

All of sudden, the move would be bounced off, and twisted muscles and joints would be recovered back to normal.

Tsk...

I was getting frustrated from the reality not quite cooperating with my expectations. At that moment, someone came to me.

“Let’s talk for a bit.”

“Who are you again?”

“Kim Min-huk! We just talked.”

One thing special about Kim Min-huk was that he had an ordinary looking face that did not look special or stand out.

Along with a few other rankers, he was one of the rankers who were actively standing up against the Representative Federation.

I personally had been thinking highly of them for being good people.

What they were doing was not going to benefit them or hurt

them in any way.

They were working hard for the sake of the others. People like that were rare.

So, although I didn't remember his name, it was not because I didn't care about him or thought little of him.

It was just that he looked too ordinary, to the point of making me unable to recall his name when I saw his face.

There was also the fact that I was introduced to many people at once, so I was confused.

“What did you say your name was again just now?”

“I said it is Kim Min-huk!”

*

“If I knew this was going to happen, I would have spread the word on the Community and made it an issue.”

The idea was considering that, among the victims, the people who reported would be in danger. Also, this idea was something that Kim Min-huk, the one who just said the above, strongly objected before.

Obtaining information about the day of the great harmony ended up being a poison. A sense of complacency, thinking things could be simply handled when the day came, occurred as of result.

Actually, I was thinking the same.

“So, a dirty conflict among certain factions are packaged as fight about pride.”

‘They sure do all sorts of things.’

“Clearing the Tutorial will continue. While some people continue to move up, it could not be helped that some people will be lagging behind. There are talks about social system that connects waiting rooms on the lower floors for the people like that.”

“Does that make any sense? That? That side is doing stuff right now.”

“Of course not. It is just a cover story that those bastards are putting up. They are trying to make it so that a third party would have a hard time butting in to this. Also...”

“Also what?”

“There are too many people who are connected to that side. There are more of them than I thought. I was determined and worked hard on digging around... I think there are over ten people among the challengers at the third floor. I’m talking about just in

the normal difficulty. I don't know much about the hard difficulty, but there probably are some."

... This was slowly making my head ache.

"At the moment, anyone at even third or fourth floor are called upper group challengers or rankers. However, if you consider the entire 100 floors, these are lower floors. Those bastards' plan is to expand their organization to tenth floor at least. That guy named Lee Chang-suk... He must have a way with words. There are too many people who had been turned."

"... To summarize, the work got fucking tangled up."

"Yeah. I'm asking because of that. You... How strong are you?"

"Me?"

The first thing I had been checking since entering this place was other people's equipment and abilities.

It was easy to observe their equipment.

If they didn't have much of the clothing or items from the real world and had many of the weapons and armors purchased from the Tutorial, I could assume that they were relatively strong.

As for the abilities, there was not much to see.

‘I can’t tell how strong that person is, but I can certainly tell how weak that person is.’

Things like the way a person walk, body pose, distance maintained from other people...

I never knew things like these could be used to judge people’s strength, but it did work.

Also, the information about other difficulties that I obtained from the Community...

As the last thing, I based it off by listening in to their conversations.

‘It won’t be possible to determine everyone’s strength precisely. It is not like I’m the Terminator.’

However, looking at the people who were usually called rankers, I could see the overall standard of the challengers inside the Tutorial.

So, my conclusion was...

“Me? I am not sure. I don’t know what I should compare myself to.”

“If you compared yourself to rankers in the normal difficulty or the ones at the third floor in the hard difficulty? How strong are you then?”

‘If I compared myself to those runts?’

“I’m fucking strong.”

Chapter 44 - The Day Of The Great Harmony

(2)

I found it surprising that there were such differences among people based on what difficulty group they belonged to.

Overall, the ones from the Easy difficulty looked rather relaxed.

They could move up as long as they put their mind to it and worked hard. They didn't need to muster any courage. With a little bit of effort, they could survive without danger and not go to higher floors.

It meant earning points was that much easier for them.

In other words, the difficulty of the traps was lower for them.

The ones in Normal difficulty were completely divided in two kinds of groups.

There were people who had been just holding out in the first floor while buying meat jerkies and water.

If they continued that lifestyle, it was obvious that their health would be negatively affected by it. Those people had been repeating entering and leaving the waiting room throughout the round and keeping their health.

Quite literally, they were fully focused only on holding out.

The other kind was a group composed of the people usually called rankers, the upper group of challengers in the normal difficulty.

Currently, they were the people who lead in the Tutorial... no... within the Community.

With clearing the Tutorial as the goal, they had been gathering and spreading information, and they had been garnering the people's support from doing so.

And lastly, the people from Hard difficulty had a unique atmosphere about them.

While the Third Round was repeating, the challengers of the Hard difficulty dwelled mostly in first and second floors.

After the First Round, with the spread of the information, the death rate declined significantly. However, the number of people who succeeded in clearing the first and second floor was extremely small.

The people in the waiting room got switched every time the Round repeated, so naturally, they knew each other very well.

Although they met each other again in this grassy plain,

“Oh... Yeah.”

“Well, it has been a while. Has it been almost a month?”

Those were the extents of their conversations.

Also, there was an air of a club-like feel that was unique to them.

Perhaps it was the result of combining the high probability of survival and low clear rate.

Of them all, the really unique ones were the people who were the minority on the third floor.

In the Community, posts complaining about how they were clueless about how to clear the third floor in Hard difficulty came up often.

In fact, even the first challenger of the third floor in the Hard difficulty, who got there during Round Two, did not manage to move past the third floor when it was nearing the end of the Round Three.

The people from the Hard difficulty were, overall, frustrated.

Even I, who was watching them, was also frustrated.

The Hard difficulty's third floor was similar to Hell difficulty's second floor in many ways, especially the area where the heat continued.

That was the issue.

“So build up resistance!”

“How am I supposed to raise that? To raise the resistance, I need to be half way to death, and the waiting room is super far away. What if I died while trying?”

‘You just need to tough it out right up to just before your death and go back.’

“Also, burn resistance! The burn resistance! How am I supposed to raise that one?”

“By the way, honestly, what's the point of the burn resistance? The corridor doesn't even have any sunlight coming in, so what burn? Do you get burn from going to a steam room?”

‘You can get burned here, you dumbass.’

“Why don't you just use a heat stone and make fire to raise the burn resistance?”

When I said that, people stared at me with an odd look in their

eyes.

It was not ‘oh that makes sense’ kind of response. It was ‘what the hell are you talking about?’ kind of response.

Ugh...

Because it was such a bother to explain it through words, I decided to just demonstrate it with my body.

I brought out a heat stone and a fabric from my inventory.

I wrapped the heat stone with the fabric and rubbed it quickly.

Shortly after, the fabric caught fire.

I dropped the fabric to the floor, gathered dry grass from the surroundings, and tossed them in.

“You can make a fire like this.”

However, these runts were focused on something else.

“Hey! Is your hand all right? Wasn’t that hot to hold?”

“Does anyone have water left in the inventory? Bring a cold one! Cool it for now!”

“... It’s fine. It is not hot. Actually, it is hot, but it will get healed automatically in this place, so why are you all up in arms about it? You can increase your resistance skill this way. Got it?”

Kim Min-huk, who was watching from the side, said as if he was just throwing it out there.

“So, what levels are your resistance skills?”

“Level 4 for the heat and cold. I think it is level 7 for the burn.”

Having heard what I just said, the people had similar responses.

“... Your resistance skill level is 7? Are you even human?”

“It doesn’t seem to be the case here.”

“Um. Definitely not. You. You don’t have problems with your nervous system somewhere, right?”

“If I was born with a body like that guy, a body that cannot feel anything, I wonder if I could clear the third floor?”

‘I think I better not tell them what level I am with the pain resistance.’

At that moment, sound of commotion could be heard from a distance.

Having heard it, people's heads turned to the direction, and some of the rankers' faces darkened.

The Representative Federation made an entrance.

*

An uncomfortable stand-off continued.

It had been going for 30 minutes already.

“So, that's why I am telling you to show us that proof of yours, little bro.”

Having heard Lee Chang-suk's words, Kim Min-huk promptly closed his mouth.

Most of the information we obtained about the Representative Federation was from the people that spied and reported to us about them.

Unless we obliterated the Representative Federation now, the people who reported us the information could be retaliated against after Round Four began.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that Kim Minhuk was a good guy.

The way he treated others, his moral, his way of thinking, his behaviors... All of them showed that he was an earnest young man.

However, he was too soft, which was his biggest drawback.

If he was just a little selfish, he could have brought forward the people as the proof. If he did, he would not be suffering humiliation like he was at the moment, and he would not be shaking in fury either.

Of course, if he did bring the people forward, I would have been disappointed in him a little.

“I know that we do not exactly get along well with rankers, but acting like this is not right, little bro.”

Lee Chang-suk kept on saying similar things. I ignored him and looked around.

People were slowly backing away from the scene.

The mood was turning violent. Fearing they might get engulfed into a fight, they were pulling out, distancing themselves.

There were some who were watching with excitement and

anticipation for a possible fight.

Shortly after, a group from the Representative Federation showed up and a few rankers walked out in response.

The two groups greeted each other with a smile, as if they were already familiar with one another.

From that point and on, the balance of the forces was completely handed over to the Representative Federation.

In the end, our side's forces were made of few rankers from Normal difficulty, and I was eventually added to the group soon after.

The other side was made of a large number of Easy difficulty challengers.

Their floor levels were low. They were the people who intentionally gave up on clearing the Tutorial since the Round One.

There were a few from the Normal difficulty rankers and Hard difficulty challengers in the mix.

Moreover, I couldn't know for certain if there were any among the rankers on our side that were actually connected to the other side.

Also, their associates could be among the spectators who were watching from a far.

As for our side...

Our side was mad from the top of the head.

It seemed Kim Min-huk was completely infuriated from watching Lee Chang-suk spitting out lies after lies with a casual look on his face.

‘If a real fight broke out, I wonder how many of the people here would try to fight seriously? Especially when they are at a disadvantage...

There probably won’t be many. There will be just Kim Min-huk and a few.

Including myself, perhaps four or five?’

This was the reason why Kim Min-huk was not thinking about just charging in and solving this by force.

Behind the Representative Federation...

The members of the Representative Federation were standing in a row, in a long line.

It was as if they were trying to block the view so we could not see the people behind them.

I could tell immediately the difference in floor levels between the members of the Federation and the people standing behind them.

Their attitude, posture, and facial expression.

The situation was more serious than I thought.

The people were choking in fear. Their fear stricken faces were far more serious than I thought.

While I was looking at the people behind the Federation members, my eyes met with a girl.

She was a student wearing a worn-out and torn uniform.

‘She is still wearing something like that. That means she does not have the points for purchasing equipment.’

The problem was the look on the girl’s face.

‘How could I describe that...’

She had a serious, determined look on her face. It was like the

look of an independence activist during World War II against the Axis powers.

No matter how I looked at her face, it was certain she was hell bent on doing something soon.

‘What is she trying to do?’

When her eyes met mine, she maintained the eye contact and nodded her head slowly.

It was like someone signaling to say I should get ready, and the moment was now.

‘Hey, just what are you going to do? I have not heard anything about any plans.’

It was awkward.

At that moment, the girl made a sudden, large movement.

[Battle Focus]

In the world that was slowed down, the girl ran forward.

Moving past the people who were blocking her front, in a straight line, she made a dash toward me, still with the same

determined look on her face.

Behind her, a hand which was trying to grab hold of her shoulder was slowly approaching.

Based on the muscle movement on the top side of the hand, vertically raised angle of the finger, and dark red light surrounding the surface of the finger...

‘It is some kind of skill.’

*

‘Lee Ho-jae. That man must be him.’

There were people who looked frustrated, unable to sit still or were just looking around, but he was calmly standing among those people.

‘Of the people who are called the rankers, that man is the only one who might be able to help.’

That man was calmly looking around the area.

He was not even thinking about talking to the pigs around him.

He was like that from the start.

As soon as he faced the pigs, he moved his belt with the sword attached. He moved it a little to the side and hid a small sword behind.

After that, with one of his arm behind him and standing a little apart from the people, he had been cautiously watching the place.

He was completely different.

He was completely different from the pigs around me and the bastards over there who were nothing but talk.

He was different through his appearance alone.

As if they were purposely matched, he wore black equipment on the top and bottom, and had belt, boots, gloves, three long and short swords, and even a heavy looking shield.

There was almost no realism to it.

He had so many items. It meant he purchased them all with points.

‘When this day of great harmony ends, the Tutorial will continue again.

Soon, Round Three will end, and Round Four will start.

After that, there will be three days of standby.'

I didn't have much time left.

This day of the great harmony was my last chance.

To be precise, that man was probably my last chance.

Lee Ho-jae...

On the day when my big sister died, she handed me the meat jerky that she kept hidden in her sleeves and hugged me. After that, she came next to my ears and slowly told me the information she had found from the Community.

They were not very useful in particular.

They were information I could find on my own readily by opening the Community after three days of standby and 24 hours of residency, when I ended up in the Tutorial stage by myself.

Really, they were not the kind that would need someone to risk life to obtain.

However, I remembered the information she whispered to my ear clearly, as if they were engraved in me letter by letter.

Of the information she gave me, there was one about a man named Lee Ho-jae.

He was the only survivor of the Hell difficulty.

In the Community, he was treated as a fool with overactive imagination. However, to give information to the newbies, he had been explaining about the traps all this time.

Also, he was with the Normal difficulty rankers now.

Most of the people who thought he was a fool were the Normal difficulty rankers. Considering this fact, I found it to be quite surprising.

I did not know the details, but regardless, this meant the people no longer thought of him as a fool.

All of this information told me one thing. The man named Lee Ho-jae was strong.

Not just that, he even tries to help others.

As I thought, he was the only one.

... Our gazes met.

Ah, it looked like that man also knew that I am the person who reported about the Federation and handed over the information.

I had no plan.

‘For now, I’m just going to go to him.

This is not the kind of problem that could be solved by a conversation anyway.

I have to make him take action and beat the crap out of these pigs.’

With that in mind, with resolve, I charged forward.

As I ran, my gaze was fixated at the man named Lee Ho-jae only.

He sighed with a cryptic look on his face, and then...

He disappeared.

It was as if he never existed.

It was unbelievable, so I looked around. However, I realized that he was standing behind me.

He dusted off his hands.

He had an annoyed look on his face, and had some sort of a scribble on his forehead that shined in blue light.

*

There was a school girl who was just running toward me without any plan, and there was a man's hand that was trying to catch her. Looking at the situation, I felt weary.

Perhaps I was making a late confession, but I was born with a strange fate.

My fate was the kind where I was not supposed to step up and stand in front of others.

When I confessed my first love...

When I found corruption in the student council president election...

When I went straight to the team's owner when I could not stand the incompetency of the director...

When I visited the association because of the problems about how the new players were being treated...

Whenever I stepped up and stood in front of others to help them and solve problems, in the end, everyone was met with despair and unhappiness.

Strangely, I only made the problem bigger.

Regardless of my intent, people I tried to help ended up suffering, and this cycle continued.

I didn't become a professional gamer for 1:1 RTS game for nothing.

I was unstoppable in WOW arena, but I couldn't even properly act as the captain in the raid.

So, I wanted to avoid stepping up as much as possible.

However, this world did not leave me be.

Looking at the girl who was trying to run towards me and the man trying to catch her, I realized I had no choice.

[Blink]

As soon as I got behind the school girl, I planted my fist on the stomach of the man who was trying to catch her.

With a ‘puk!’ sound, the man was thrown to the back, rolling and rolling.

I could see the people’s faces beyond the guy.

The state the people were in, and the look on their faces... I could clearly see them.

Lee Chang-suk, no, the pig, screamed.

“What the, fuck! What the hell are you doing! Even if we are not in good terms! Fuck! Why are you beating up someone out of the blue!? What’s this for?”

The captain pig lead the way, and the other pigs around him also started to yell.

They said it was unprovoked, the young one has gone insane, and even brought up bad upbringing from parents.

‘However...’

“What.”

“What, what did you expect me to do?”

The pigs started to yell louder.

“If you don’t like it, then bring it on, you chicken shits.”

‘This is the exact showcase of the strong preying on the weak, the thing you guys love the most. So come on.’

From the start, I had no intention of trying to talking to those runts like Kim Min-huk tried.

This was not something that could be solved by a conversation.

Those people were not going to admit their own wrong doings.

Even if what they have done was to be brought up, and even if evidences were brought up right on their faces, they probably would have said it was just a misunderstanding.

Also, there was a chance I may never see them again when this day of great harmony ended.

I had to solve this now.

[Talaria’s Wings]

Wings spread wide from my back and separated the school girl from the pigs.

When a strange gigantic blue crystal wings appeared out of nowhere and opened wide, the look of panic settled on the pigs' faces.

I took a step forward.

“Don't be so surprised. This is nothing. As you guys have said, let's resolve this misunderstanding. That's all I'm trying to do here.”

“Wait a minute, little bro. I understand that the situation is frustrating right now, but I can explain everything, you see? Little bro, it won't be a bad story for you either. Just ten minutes... No. Just give me five minutes, and...”

I ignored the pig who was making noise.

“I think the process of resolving this misunderstanding could be a bit rough, but well... It is not like anybody can get seriously hurt in here.”

Of all the pigs, a few started to move in hurriedly and awkwardly.

‘Now that it looks like a fight is about to break out, you want to get out? I memorized all of your faces.’

Little by little, the pigs were taking steps back.

I still had a lot of time.

‘Um... I still have about 18 hours.’

It was enough for me to figure out a way to break through the system’s defense.

Fortunately, I had plenty of pigs for the experiments.

“Just think of it as raising your pain resistance, so just put your mind at ease. I’m an expert in that field.”

Chapter 45 - The Day Of The Great Harmony

(3)

“Hey you bastards! What are you all doing just sitting around! Stop that bastard!”

‘That’s if they can stop me. From how I see it, if they charge in towards me instead of running away, I would actually be thankful. It’ll be less work for me.’

I disengaged Talaria’s Wing and took a stance.

“Iaaaaaaaak!”

Along with that shout, there was a man who was trying to swing his arm after having it pulled all the way back. I clicked my tongue and watched him.

‘If you attack someone like that, I bet the opponent would really get hit for sure. Right?’

His fist was coming at me along an easily predictable trajectory. With one hand I caught his first and used my other hand to push in the elbow joint in the wrong way.

A blunt sound could be heard. Bone from the elbow’s joint tore out of the skin.

Right at that moment, through an invisible force, my hands were pushed away.

‘As I thought, it was just for a moment but it works.’

Just as expected, the man’s elbow was healed immediately.

However, the man was struggling on the floor, laying on his stomach while grabbing his elbow.

‘Feigning pain, are you?’

The system’s healing effect completely erased the pain as well.

In other words, that man was struggling because he was either shocked from the pain that he felt at the moment or suffering from a phantom pain.

Tsk.

The man was still crawling on the ground. I stomped on the man’s head and looked at my next target.

There was a giant man who charged towards me from the front.

He was wielding a large sword.

‘He is about the size of a goblin.’

However, he wasn’t as skilled as one.

‘His stance is all wrong. He can’t bring about the maximum reach like that. Actually, is he so bad at this that he can’t even figure out the possible attack distance?’

I raised my foot and kicked him right on the pit of the stomach.

The impact was going to be dulled because of the system, but it was not like the system was going to completely eliminate the shock from the impact.

There was also the momentum from him charging towards me.

Combining them all, the impact was going to be enough to kill a pig.

The giant gasped for air and got pushed back.

Dealing trauma to the lung or other internal organs worked as well.

To be precise, this was about immobilizing the opponent by hitting the respiratory track.

The shock to the respiratory track and internal organs was going to be recovered quickly, but it was going to be enough for the fight.

The giant was pushed back. He took steps to stay standing up. I charged in to follow him and smacked him on the jaw.

The jaw, which was supposed to aim toward the ground, was turned 180 degrees and spun up toward the sky.

‘I wonder what would happen with this?’

The man fell on the spot like a gigantic log.

After a moment, his neck came back to its proper position on its own.

‘It’s like a scene from a horror movie.’

Along with a hard breathing sound, the giant started to breathe again.

However, he was still unconscious.

The giant got beat up in a one-sided fight and collapsed. Having watched this, other runts who were charging at me stopped immediately in their tracks.

As I thought, the protection by the system was not perfect.

Damage could be dealt to arm joint, internal organs and even the neck bone.

The system was almost completely nullifying blade attacks, and shock from impacts were dulled.

On top of that, rapid healing effect was added, and there was a limitation that made it impossible to continue using joint-based attack or choking for long.

However, aiming for the critical areas and instantly pressing down or bending worked.

Of course, the wounds were healed quickly, but that just meant more time for those bastards to experience pain.

Before I realized, Kim Min-huk and a few rankers had circled the Representative Federation.

‘Are they trying to prevent the Federation from running? He made a quick decision.’

As soon as he saw my strength, he concluded that they will win. He then made a move to surround the enemies and destroy them all at once.

‘Actually, even if the pigs ran away, I am confident that I can catch them all in ten minutes.’

“Nice move. What kind of skill is that?”

‘He is a ranker. What was his name again? I don’t remember.’

I was not good at remembering names from looking at faces.

‘Well, trying to remember the face of a runt like that would be just a waste of brain space.’

Some people around me murmured the name, Myoung Jin-chan.

‘Ah, the sixth floor on the normal difficulty.’

He was one of the top challengers among the normal difficulty rankers.

“By the way, did you know that you aren’t the only one with skills?”

After saying that, Myoung Jin-chan mumbled something for a moment.

After a moment, blue light lingered around the tip of the spear that he was holding.

It could have strengthening and sudden acceleration effect like the one from the second instructor goblin at second floor.

It could be something that enhanced his physical abilities as well.

The bastard was smiling with full of confidence. I said,

“If you are done, hurry up and fight. Mr. Nobody.”

‘It’s not like that’s a skill worth making a fuss about. Why is he wasting my time dragging along like this?’

Although I told him to come at me, I actually charged in first for the strike.

His spear tip with blue light quickly came at me. However, I dodged it and drew Gladius.

‘It would be no good to thrust a spear so hurriedly like that.’

Regardless, thrust attacks showed gap in defense when it failed. This guy did not prepare for this at all. Instead, he made a full, deep thrust motion. He was also awkward at taking back steps to gain distance.

A spear had a long reach, which was a great advantage. However, the spearman didn’t even know how to control the distance.

Calling him Mr. Nobody suited him perfectly.

I cut Myoung Jin-chan's hand that was holding the spear. To be precise, I struck it.

Although I swung at his hand like I was going to cut off his fingers, the impact was dull like the strike was made with a wooden sword.

'Thought so. Because of the meddling from the system, this won't work.'

Pain was inflicted on his hand at an instant, and Myoung Jin-chan ended up letting go of the spear because of the pain. He tumbled and picked up the spear again. I looked at him as if he was a fool, and then I put away Gladius.

'He dropped his spear in middle of that? To think that he is one of the top rankers. Looks like there will be no need for me to use Blink or Talaria's Wing.'

Instead of the short sword, I brought out the Savage warrior's backsword, which had the advantage in terms of length and weight.

Since blade attacks did not work in this space, it was pointless to swing sharp weapons. It was the same as swinging something else that was blunt.

I had no complaints.

A club was best for giving a good beating.

I thought about [the stick that my middle school teacher used to carry around to give students beatings as punishment.](#)

[TL: Back in about 20 years ago or so, it was perfectly fine for teachers in Korea to beat the crap out of students for punishment.]

If I compared a short sword to a two feet long ruler, Gladius is about as long as a broom stick that's broken in half, and this backsword is like a billiard stick.

‘Teacher, I, your unworthy student, will follow your teachings.’

It was not like these pigs were going to be corrected even if the teacher came in person. However, it was not like the beatings I was about to deliver were for the sake of teaching them anything, so it did not matter.

*

I lied down on the grassy field and closed my eyes. The grassy field felt gentle.

As I thought, this place was Kirikiri's mound.

I thought that there was no other place better suited for taking a

nap during the day time.

There was the gentle grassy field, and there was a cool breeze.

The sunlight was not too bright.

It was perfect.

I could hear sounds of what could be described as screams of dying pigs. If it wasn't for it, it would have been even more perfect.

I had a good reason why I was leisurely lying on the grass.

First, I felt so refreshed that I could fly right now.

To think that beating up people made me feel this refreshed...

It was odd, but it was true.

The onslaught of beating continued for a few hours, and that completely cleared the stress I had accumulated lately.

Moreover, in this space, you could not get tired, so I didn't even feel exhausted from the hard labor of giving the pigs the beatings.

It felt like I just got out of a bath on a hot spring. I felt like I was sitting on a bench while drinking a banana milk. It felt that

relaxing and refreshing.

‘It is perfect for just stretching out, is it not?’

The second reason was to check the status window.

[Basic swordsmanship (Lv. 7)]

Wow...

My swordsmanship skill was up.

I did not think it would go up from fighting those pathetic pigs.

I thought about it for a moment, and I realized that I have never fought opponents that were weaker than me.

Even when I was fighting against goblins by the hundreds, it was made possible only because I had the power skills from the gods.

Even a grunt goblin soldier was far stronger than those pigs. It was beyond comparison.

The difference in physical attributes were big. The difference in combat strength was at a whole another dimension.

Naturally, my swordsmanship was developed toward passive methods that allowed me to dodge the enemy attacks.

I used shield to block or dodge the attacks, and then I used my quick speed to aim for the gap in the enemy's defense and hit the critical points.

It was effective. However, it was thrust oriented, and lacked in variety.

However, when I was beating the crap out of those pigs, I used the backsword like a club.

Since I obviously had the protection from the system, I didn't bother to think about dodging or blocking attacks either.

Thanks to that, I got to try new attack patterns. As of result, my swordsmanship skill's level went up.

‘Um... If it is possible, I would like to beat them some more...’

I gave a quick glance to the direction where the pigs were screaming.

Unfortunately, it did not look like my turn would come.

The third and the last reason why I was just killing time while

lying on the field...

I didn't exactly have anything left to do at the moment.

When I really started to beat the crap out of the pigs, Kim Min-huk stepped in.

It was not like we were going to fight along with each other.

The fight was already over.

Kim Min-huk went to the pigs that I beat to pulp and tied them in ropes.

I had no idea when he had such things ready.

It seemed even Kim Min-huk was thinking he should neutralize them by force if there was an opportunity.

Like that, all pigs related to the Representative Federation were tied up in ropes like fishes on ropes on an old school fish market. I was now talking to Kim Min-huk about what to do about the pigs.

The school girl, who had been keeping quiet until now, stepped forward.

The girls said her name was Park Jung-ah. She told us what she

thought should be done.

We judged that her opinion was the most appropriate one and left the rest to her.

Her opinion was as the following.

The most important thing for neutralizing the Representative Federation's power was sending the challengers on the first floor to the second floor and beyond. This was the most effective measure.

Also, we had to prepare for retaliation that could come after the day of the great harmony ended.

Finally, to make sure these bastards do not even think about committing the same immoral acts toward the new challengers, the bastards had to be punished severely and break their spirit.

So, Park Jung-ah proposed that the Representative Federation's pigs should be used as sandbags for combat training.

It was to eliminate the victims' fear and to get them used to the combat even if it was for just a little bit. Also, she said this will bring the people together from having directly fought against the pigs of the Representative Federations.

To begin with, there were more victims than the Representative Federation members. If all of the victims charged in and fought

them instead of choking in fear, there was no way that the side with superior number was going to lose inside the waiting room where the injuries healed automatically.

Of course, it would have been a different story if there was a strong one that could ignore the difference in number or the protection by the system. However, the Representative Federation didn't have such a person.

First, she gathered everyone standing on the field to a place and explained the evil acts perpetrated by the Representative Federation and the suffering of the victims.

Like that, she even garnered understanding from the people who were not related to the Representative Federation. She garnered support from them toward the victims, and she requested punishment against the Representative Federation.

Also, she rallied the victims together.

She gathered the people and raised their fighting spirit for resistance. She talked about what needed to be done in the future.

Along with the possibilities of the future, she also talked about the danger. However, her overall message contained hope.

Kim Min-huk and other rankers took a step back. Their roles were limited to just supporting her.

They said that it was the right thing to do to have Park Jung-ah, one of the victims, lead the process and resolve it.

As soon as the situation was organized like that, Park Jung-ah executed the idea that she told me and Kim Min-huk.

So, at the moment, on the green plain over there, the rankers were using the pigs as sandbags and teaching the victims of the Representative Federation the basic moves for boxing and swordsmanship.

Occasionally, there were victims that refused to participate in the training. However, we did not accept their refusal.

Even if they cried and refused, we forced them to attack the pigs.

No matter how I thought about it, it was unethical. However, I could not think of anything else that was better.

Like that, the situation was concluded.

So, now that I have finished my part in the matter, I was just sitting around.

‘There is still about 13 hours left before the day of the great harmony is over.

Should I really just take a nap, or should I go join the victims and

practice swordsmanship together?’

I was thinking about what to do, but I could hear a light footsteps coming toward me.

It was Park Jung-ah.

“It must’ve been hard for you too.”

I greeted her with that. Park Jung-ah lightly lowered her head and plummeted next to me, and then she got on her knees.

‘... This kid has a talent for making a person panic.’

I got up awkwardly.

“Thank you so much. On behalf of my older sister and other victims, thank you.”

‘Older sister?’

Was there an older girl next to her?

I didn’t see anyone who was talking to her as if they were close?’

“Also... I know I am intruding, but I have one more favor to ask of you.”

Like that, Park Jung-ah's story started. It was a pretty long story, longer than I thought it would be.

She started with her story before she entered the Tutorial. She then told the stories about what happened to her after entering the Tutorial and how her older sister died.

After that, she told the stories about what happened there after.

Her stories ended with her asking me to lend her my strength.

"I know I am intruding. I'll pay for this debt for the rest of my life. I'll never forget it."

'... Out of the blue... you are asking me to lend you my strength?

Should I train her or something?

Should I get her something like the Devil's Fruit from 'One-Piece'?

I suddenly thought about the handgun that I purchased earlier.

It had no restriction on who could use it. Also, it was probably incredibly powerful.

Kirikiri said it was necessary for clearing the Fifth Floor.

I needed it too.

“How are you going to pay back the debt?”

“I’ll live the rest of my life for the sake of the others. I’ll fight to protect the others.”

She said it with such determination and resolve that I was at a loss for words. It was ridiculous.

‘Hey. How is that considered repaying the debt to me? It seems like this girl is misunderstanding me about something. Still, if I told her she needs to return the favor back to me directly, I would look undignified.

God damn it, she got me on a checkmate.

I cannot refuse to help her after hearing something like that.

Wait, did this runt give me that speech just now on purpose while aiming for this?’

I didn’t say anything back to her. Instead, I just opened my inventory and gave her the handgun while hoping I would look cool and chic.

“It is a magical tool that will cause explosion from a distance. Here is the barrel, and this is the trigger. It does not have a safety lock, so be careful. Also, it only has five shots, so use it sparingly.”

“How powerful is it?”

“Honestly, I do not know. I have never shot it before myself.”

“I think I’ll have to shoot it once as a test.”

Park Jung-ah said that and started to walk toward somewhere.

I was actually curious about the handgun’s power, so I followed her.

Park Jung-ah approached a pig that was working hard getting beat the crap out of.

‘Was his name Lee Chang-suk?’

She walked toward Lee Chang-suk.

Standing in front of Lee Chang-suk, who was working hard at receiving beatings, she brought out a potion bottle from the inventory.

‘Where did she get that? Wasn’t she a challenger in the First

Floor?’

She calmly opened the lid and applied its content on one of her hand.

The liquid appeared to be some kind of lubricant.

‘Or is it oil?’

Lee Chang-suk received more beating than anyone. He received more painful beating than anyone. However, thanks to the healing effect by the system, appearance wise, he looked fresh.

His face was a mess with blood and tears. He was not able to talk properly and having difficulty catching his breath. From that perspective, he did not look all right. Still...

Regardless, I just meant that he did not appear to be seriously hurt anywhere on his body.

Park Jung-ah had a calm look on her face. She slowly pushed in her fingers, which had lubricant applied, in the gap just below Lee Chang-suk’s eye.

Slowly, little by little, her fingers went in deeper.

Lee Chang-suk’s eyeball looked like it could pop out... No. Actually, it really was slowly coming out.

Regardless, his eyeball was not pulled out or destroyed, so system did not do anything.

‘There was a method like that.’

Lee Chang-suk was foaming on his mouth like a rabid dog and struggled. However, Park Jung-ah remained resolute.

Using the gap that she made with her finger, instead of the finger, she shoved in the narrow barrel of the handgun. Having realized this, Lee Chang-suk’s desperate struggle reached its peak.

His screaming was so loud that it was making me go deaf.

I shall omit the desperate swears, curses and pleads for life that Lee Chang-suk poured out in the process.

BOOM!!

The explosive sound was closer to the sound of a lightning bolt striking down instead of a gunfire.

Lee Chang-suk’s head became just a lump of blood. Its shape could no longer be identified. Actually, to be precise, it became so grotesque to look at that it was hard to stare at to identify it.

At an instant, Lee Chang-suk became a corpse with its head

exploded. The system did not provide him with healing.

Due to the explosion, blood and pieces of flesh were thrown up into the air. When they fell back down, Park Jung-ah felt them as if they were spring rain shower. Fiddling with the handgun, Park Jung-ah quietly mumbled,

“It is not bad.”

‘... Oh my... This bastard is crazier than me. No, this bitch is crazier than me. To think someone like that would be out there...’

The way she looked at the moment made it hard to believe that she just killed her tormentor.

There was no madness, sadness, bliss or emptiness.

It looked like she just wanted to test the handgun’s power, and she looked calm as if she only did what she was supposed to have done. I felt shocked, and I felt fear.

I thought that, if there ever was a person with the heart of iron then it must be her.

I thought I got used to blood and death from being in the Tutorial. However, it was scary even for me to look.

Park Jung-ah raised the hand that was holding the handgun. She

raised her voice and garnered everyone's attention toward her.

She did not look like a priestess who received people's admiration and respect. Instead, she looked like a devil who used force and fear to oppress and rule over the people.

In the area, the sounds of people screaming and puking never stopped. However, ironically, sounds of cheer and applause also exploded.

Also, she stepped up over the headless corpse of Lee Chang-suk and started another speech.

Just like that, the watchmen who protect the law and order of the Tutorial's Korean server, the Order of Vigilance was born.

Chapter 46 - Tutorial 5th Floor (2)

[Round Three, Day 28, 10:30]

It had been two days since the day of the great harmony ended.

Back then, my plan was to resume my conquest of the Fifth Floor as soon as the day of the great harmony ended.

However, I had been busy minding the cleanup of the Representative Federation and the establishment of the Order of Vigilance. As of result, I ended up wasting another day.

During the day of the great harmony, in middle of the green plain, Park Jung-ah executed Lee Chang-suk with her own hands. After that, she established the Order of Vigilance.

A significant number of the victims became the member of the Order.

It seemed that some of them already had made up their minds to join her even before the day of the great harmony.

Her actions made many panic and also found it to be repulsive.

However, there were some who were inspired by her boldness.

There were many from Normal and Hard difficulty who joined the Order of Vigilance.

During that day, with her torn school uniform's skirt waving in the air and her body painted in blood, Park Jung-ah gave a heartfelt speech toward everyone and the people gathered around her.

They followed her like a messiah.

Park Jung-ah had people gathered in one place and told her plans and actions for the future. She looked like the Joan of Arc from the history book.

‘No. Actually, I wonder if it would be all right to say she looked like the Joan of Arc when she was painted in blood like a devil?’

On second thought...

Perhaps even Joan of Arc would have looked that fearsome to her enemies.

Kim Min-huk and the rankers joined the Order. I, the one who was responsible for defeating Lee Chang-suk and the Representative Federation, also joined the Order of Vigilance.

The motto of the Order was simple.

The goal was to establish and maintain the order and rule that provided essential minimum safety and rights to the challengers inside the Tutorial.

While the rankers and top challengers, also known as conquerors, tried their best and headed to the higher floors, the Order of Vigilance stepped up to look after the challengers at the lower floors who have not yet obtained the power to continue.

During that day, at that spot on the green plain, Park Jung-ah proposed the internal rules for the Order of Vigilance and universal laws for all challengers inside Tutorials should be made.

At that place, people brought their heads together and made essential rules.

You shall not commit act of violence toward another.

You shall not rape.

You shall not steal.

You shall not violate the freedom of another.

As the basis for the laws that were to be established, these four rules were made.

They also let it be known to all that anyone who violated the four rules will be punished by the Order of Vigilance, and the trial and punishment procedures will be strictly decided by the Order through the internal rules of the Order.

Of course, the Order's internal rules were virtually blank at the moment, but regardless...

Many people found the idea repulsive. Many were concerned that the Order of Vigilance might head in the bad direction in the future and get corrupted, turning into the second Representative Federation. However, we marched on with the idea despite the negative reactions from the people.

Like that, the talks of the rules and laws were concluded.

The executions resumed again.

Park Jung-ah selected the worst of all members of the Representative Federation and executed them. The rest of the Federation members were put on surveillance list.

The members of the Representative Federation were mentally collapsed completely from the terror of handgun executions and from being subjected to violence for almost 15 hours.

They were in shambles. Let alone thinking about more wicked things, it seemed they may not even be able to walk properly.

However, Park Jung-ah, as if she was thinking they should not let their guard down, declared that a part of the Order's members, including herself, will remain in the First Floor's waiting room while giving up clearing the floor so they can prepare for unexpected turmoil in the next round.

As the last thing, she said there was a need for accurate and courteous instruction for the new challengers who will enter the Tutorial during the next round.

It was so the people who were suddenly kidnapped by the Tutorial could understand the situation and better prepare them for what was to come. It was also to inform new challengers of rules that must be followed.

Kim Min-huk chose to handle this and made notifications about information and cautions on the Community. The form was similar to an introductory or instruction manual.

Like that, everything was concluded early in the morning yesterday.

It took another day after the day of the great harmony ended.

The whole ordeal gave me a serious headache.

‘As I thought, I am not fit for the kind of business that involve people giving out their opinions, finding answers that satisfy everyone when they are in disagreement, and planning for the

future.

I am better off struggling by myself.'

Perhaps that was the reason why, but I was a little glad to see a gigantic stone gate in front of me. It felt like I was back to where I belonged, the path I should walk on.

This was the Fifth Floor's boss room.

I was already used to the use of the backsword, and it was time for me to clear the Fifth Floor.

Boss rooms were always extremely difficult no matter how easy the floor itself was, so that was making me feel a little uneasy.

However, I was confident in my abilities now.

I even believed that I'll be able to get through this safely.

The stone gate was large and heavy. I listened to the sound it made as it dragged along the floor. Like that, I entered the boss room.

When I entered the room, the opponent that entered by view was...

It was just a lizardman.

*

[Your trial will start after 30 seconds.]

It meant the glass wall separating me from the lizardman was going to disappear in next 30 seconds.

‘Hm... Is this really all of them?’

The boss rooms at the Third and Fourth Floors were not inside a marble stone room like this. Instead, they were on large open spaces. Considering that, this close quarter inside the stone room felt strange.

‘Are they asking me to have a one-on-one battle against that lizard?’

The goblins inside the boss room on the Fourth Floor had a city-size organization.

Of course, it was not like I needed to fight them all at once. It was hard to think this lizard had the combined power of the city-sized goblin group.

‘What is this? Is there a hidden trick somewhere?’

Before I was able to find an answer to my question, 30 seconds had passed.

[Defeat Idaltaru, a lizardman, the stealthy shadow warrior.]

It seemed that defeating that lizardman really was the trial for clearing the Fifth Floor.

‘A stealthy shadow warrior, huh...’

The name did not fit at all with the characteristic of lizardman, which were aggressive and violent.

Still, befitting the title, this lizardman did not charge at me.

It put forth its trident and maintained cautious distance as it observed me.

I suddenly thought about the lancer that I met during the day of the great harmony.

This lizardman was also a lancer, but the mood it exuded from just holding the trident was enough to tell me that this one was completely different.

‘I think this one is definitely strong.’

.

.

.

.

.

I was anxious and nervous. My lips went completely dry.

‘I think this is my first time engaging an opponent so carefully.’

It had been quite a while since we both aimed weapons at each other, maintained distance and circled around.

‘Is it going to stand guard like this indefinitely? Regardless, I don’t want to charge in first.’

It was certain that the lizardman was waiting for me to charge in first, so the duel could end at an instant after me getting struck by its counterattack if I charged in first.

I was at a great disadvantage.

The difference in reach was too great.

The difference in height, arm length, and weapon's length... I was at a disadvantage in all of them.

When the fighters' skills were on par with each other, the differences in reach made a critical difference, giving the one with the longer reach an absolute advantage.

'Still, it is not like the trident is always more deadly than a sword.

So, this one is called the stealthy shadow warrior...

Is this one the type that blocks or dodges the opponent's attack and aims for the counter? If that's the case, then it is similar to me.

God damn it. Let's not be so anxious.

If that side is going to lead this into a battle of mental focus and attrition, it has nothing on me.

That lizardman's face is also stiff like stone because it is nervous.

Compared to me, it is not overwhelmingly strong.

The fact that the state of being on guard is continuing like this means that we are both thinking our skills are about evenly matched.

That stiff face...

Huh?

Its facial expression... I can see its facial expression.'

Actually, that was a ridiculous idea.

I was a human. There was no way for me to tell if a lizard was nervous based on its facial expression.

'That means...'

It had the title that contained the word, 'stealthy.' It was displaying nervous attitude. It was not aggressive, and it was being defensive.

Its stance showed it was focusing on defense.

This lizardman was seriously not like a lizardman.

'However, it must be a lizardman.

I should test it.'

Lizardmen were the kind of race with extreme obsession toward their pride and strength.

Lizardmen hated being stepped on their prized tails, which they considered as beautiful and magnificent. They hated being stepped on their tails more than death itself. They could let their guard down because of this when the situation lead to it.

If the opponent's strength was overwhelming, lizardmen did not show any signs of feeling wronged in its eyes. Still, they regretted dying before demonstrating all of their true capabilities.

These were what I have learned about the lizardmen from having fought them through the process of clearing the Fifth Floor and listening to words they spat out.

Kumkum.

'I have to calm my voice. I need to make it sound as cool and powerful as I can. It needs to sound heavy and dignified like a powerful warrior from a Murim fantasy novel.'

"You are a superb warrior. I have never seen a lancer as magnificent as you in my life."

Having heard what I said, the lizardman opened its eyes big and panicked with a shocked look on its face.

It was extremely surprised. If there was [!!!] emoticon on top of its head, it would not have looked odd at this point.

It was the effect of the knowledge of the time before Babel.

The effect of this skill was not limited to just allowing me to understand other beings' languages.

After all, it was a skill gifted to me by a god.

Moreover, many gods recommended that I should be gifted with this skill.

It was possible that those gods just wanted to see me being destroyed mentally. However, I decided to use this skill to my advantage.

“The grace and fighting spirit that you exude are enough for me to sense your strength. It is an honor that I got to have this duel with you. Even if I get defeated, I will have no regrets if I died by the hands of a powerful warrior like you.”

Although I was the one who said it, I thought it could not sound more insane.

I made it up as I thought about what a battle maniac character from a fiction would say just before a duel.

It was not like I thought the line was cool or thought that was how I was feeling.

The look on the lizardman's face showed it was stunned. Having heard what I just said, I could see it was happy to hear that. It was tickling the lizardman's face.

Its mouth was wiggling. It kept on using its tongue to lick. Its eyes narrowed because its cheekbones raised up. Its rear teeth were firmly biting on the cheek. Its eyes were made sharp and narrow.

It looked like it was trying to pretend to act casual and hide that it was actually happy.

‘As I thought, this lizardman is proud of its strength.’

Surprisingly, my ability to read the lizardman's facial expression was also coming from the knowledge before the time of Babel.

Without this skill, I would not have noticed anything other than bizarre wiggling on its face.

With the skill, not only could I have a conversation with it, I could I also read its facial expressions.

I was able to communicate it with as if I belonged to the same race as the lizardman.

The knowledge before the time of Barbel was not just a simple translation skill.

[Keeruk. I am surprised to see a human speaking our tongue.]

[You are also definitely strong. It is a shame that you were born a human.]

[As my way of paying respect to having met a strong warrior in a long while, I will allow three attacks.]

It was going to allow three attacks!

‘You... are you a lizard that jumped right out of some Murim fantasy novel?’

Thank you. I’ll take them.’

It looked like this lizard usually fought by defending first and then countering, so this did not seem like a great advantage.

However, it was a great progress since I managed to make a gap and some allowances.

‘I’ll show you the end of your leisurely attitude!’

[Talaria’s Wing]

I spread my wings. As soon as I took a stance,

[Blink]

As soon as the battle begun, I started with my certain kill move, body charge!

‘Die!’

I thought the combo move would have swept away the lizardman just like that.

However, the Talaria’s Wing didn’t hit the lizardman. Instead, it went through empty air made of black smoke.

Just before colliding with the Talaria’s Wing, the lizardman turned a part of its body to gaseous form.

Talaria’s Wing went straight through the part of lizardman’s body that was turned to gaseous form.

‘What the... How is this possible?’

I was so surprised that I doubted what I just saw.

‘It turned just a part of its body into smoke. Are you made of smoke?’

On top of that, you dodged my attack by responding to it when the attack was done using the sudden leap through the space with the Blink. Does this runt also have battle focus skill that accelerates its focus?’

I had so many things I was curious about. However, I could not afford to keep on thinking about them.

There was a trident that was coming at me from the back. I barely managed to parry it with my shield. I increased the distance from the lizardman.

Fortunately, the lizardman did not charge in to close the distance.

It seemed the lizardman was serious about allowing three attacks.

I was stunned.

I never thought I would meet an opponent who the Talaria’s Wing and Blink combo would not work.

If it was not going to work, I thought that it would be against an opponent with gigantic body and mass that overwhelmed the impact from the attack.

To think that it was possible to dodge it by looking at it...

It seemed I was not the only one who was stunned. In a little excited voice, the lizardman said,

[You are truly incredible. Keruuuk. If you were the same race as me, I would have had you as my husband.]

‘...Pardon??

Husband?

What?

Is the word you just said what I think it is?

On top of that, you were female?

In that case, you are not a lizardman! Shouldn't you be called a lizardwoman?’

The lizardwoman was looking down toward me. It looked satisfied. Because of the lizardwoman's... no... the lizard's gaze...

Along with the chill sensation, my entire body felt creeped out.

I did not know why, but I threw the Gladius that I was wielding. I brought out the backsword and charged forward.

Again, the lizard turned a part of its body into gaseous form and dodged the Gladius that was coming at it.

I was expecting as much up to this point.

I swung the backsword and struck the tip of the trident.

Usually, when I did this against past enemies, the spear was move out of the way to give me an opening. However, the lizard bounced its wrist and easily absorbed the impact by spinning the tip of the spear as if it was drawing a circle.

I already had charged in. I already had thrown my body forward.

I kicked the ground, threw my body forward and charged inside the distance between me and the lizard.

Throwing oneself into the air carelessly was equal to committing suicide. However, I had the Talaria's Wing and Blink.

The lizard swung its tail to block me. I used the Talaria's Wing to block its tail. I used the shield on my left hand to strike the lizard's

face.

Having managed to deal shock to the lizard, I wanted to maintain the upper hand and pressure in. However, while I was at it, the lizard's trident came at me to pierce me, so I had to increase the distance again.

The lizard was struck by the iron shield earlier on the head. Despite that, the lizard still thrust the spear precisely toward me when I was well inside the reach distance.

It grabbed on to the spear's upper portion to make its reach shorter and thrust it.

As I thought, as far as the skill was concerned, this lizard was superior to every opponent I had faced so far.

I was looking at the lizard with nervous eyes. On the other hand...

This god damn lizard was patting the top of its nose, the part that was smacked by my shield. It looked very satisfied. It was looking at me with merciful eyes.

This was driving me nuts. It was creeping me out.

I never thought that being able to read the expression on that scale-covered face was going to be this disgusting.

‘Is there a way to temporarily disable the knowledge before the time of Babel?’

Idaltaru, the lizard, disengaged its combat stance. It extended its hand and said in a polite manner,

[For a long time, I have longed to meet a strong male.]

[Keruk. Keruk. If it is with you, I think I might be able to overcome the wall of difference in species.]

[I do not know if it would be possible to conceive from mating with a human, but would you like to at least try?]

‘Pardon?’

What did you just say?

Could it be that the knowledge before the time of Babel is broken?

I don’t understand what that lunatic lizard was trying to say?

So... Right now, what you are saying is...’

Slowly, and calmly... I went over what the wacko lizard said

earlier.

[Battle Focus]

‘Fuck, that reptile is trying to take my virginity!’

Chapter 47 - Tutorial 5th Floor (3)

[Keruk. My name is Idaltaru. You can call me Idy if you would like. Human, please tell me your name.]

Her face was full of excitement.

I could sense shyness and fluttering heart from her.

Since a while ago, her tail had been wagging left and right.

I absolutely did not want to know what that gesture meant, but unfortunately, the knowledge before the time of Babel was kindly explaining that her movement was a mating ritual by a female lizard right before mating.

This female lizard's mind was full of thoughts about wanting to take me. I had no name that I wanted to give out to someone like that.

[Battle Focus]

In the slowed world, my thought processing was accelerated.

Thanks to that lunatic's ridiculous words, my head was still in complete disarray.

‘However, to make sure her rambling does not become reality, I

need to focus on this battle right now.

I need to fight and win if I want to avoid the horrible incident later.

First thing first, that lizard named Idaltaru is definitely different from ordinary lizards.

She is different starting with her specs.

Her muscular strength, speed, and the skill in her way of handling the trident...

However, the biggest difference is that her combat style is the exact opposite of the ordinary lizards.

Maybe it is a style she developed to fight her own kind which are aggressive and violent. Her style is very calm and stable.

She sees the opponent's attack and dodges it. Also, she counters in that moment where there is a gap in the opponent's defense.'

Her tail attacks were mostly used just for blocking me from getting closer or buying herself time until she could counter with her trident.

Her moves were not instinctive. They were all very well calculated.

Of course, her combat style definitely had a limit, but it was stable.

She even possessed the skill to turn her body into gaseous form and which allowed her opponent's attack to just pass through. She was even more fearsome because of this.

Moreover, she was even able to respond to my sudden leap through space using Blink, which was incredibly fast.

Her response speed was definitely an exception to the norm.

It could be that she possessed a skill that improved her reflex and cognitive process.

It could be that her gaseous form skill had auto evasion function built in.

It was a special attribute that was common in evasion skill in video games.

However, even that cheat-like gaseous form transformation skill had a weakness.

It could be maintained only for the brief moment of impact.

When Idaltaru dodged the Gladius that I threw at her using the

gaseous form transformation, she was not able to dodge the next attack that followed. Instead, she got hit.

Just like my Blink, it seemed that continuous use was not possible.

I have found the answer.

I could get around her gaseous form transformation evasion by starting with an ordinary attack to force her to use it. Immediately after that, I could use the Talaria's Wing and Blink charge attack combination to finish the duel.

I raised the backsword and looked for an opening on Idaltaru's defense.

Having noticed that I took a combat stance again, Idaltaru was distraught.

[Human! Why do you refuse me!]

I wanted to quit this ridiculous battle of words right at this instant and just focus on the battle.

However, I could not just let this go without talking back.

“Is there any reason at all why I should not refuse you, you hideous lizard!”

On her face, Idaltaru had the look of a fragile woman who was hurt from a careless, harsh insult. It was really, really disgusting to look at.

‘Oh my... I think I’ll go insane.’

[Y... You didn’t have to say something so harsh! Keruk.]

[You shouldn’t judge someone purely based on appearance! Keruk.]

Judging from what she was saying, and how she was saying it, it seemed she was not among the prettiest in her own kind.

[If you are going to act this way, I’ll make you stay even if it is by force!]

“Don’t say such ridiculous things!”

‘Do you have multiple personalities? Just how many different characters’ personalities do you have to stuff in yourself to be satisfied?’

[Kiaaaaaoooo!]

Idaltaru raised her head high toward the sky and screamed in her beastly roar.

When she faced her front again, her eyes were saturated in red.

She roared again and charged toward me.

‘When angry, even this one charges in just like ordinary lizardmen. If she loses her cool and charges in, I can only be thankful about that.’

Along with her charging speed, a deadly thrust using her entire body’s strength came at me.

It seemed she was not thinking that I could dodge it or block it. It was a thrust attack that looked like she was just throwing her body.

‘I don’t think I can simply deflect this.’

The location of the spear’s tip is... If I tried to haphazardly parry this, the trident will pierce my body instead.’

[Battle Focus]

Because of a useless battle of words, my focus was diminished, so the Battle Focus was canceled earlier. I used the skill again.

‘Damn it. I activated it too late.’

I used the left arm that was holding the shield.

I moved it toward the spear.

‘That spear is definitely coming at me with enough force to pierce even an iron shield.

In that case, just you try to pierce through an arm too.’

Kagang!

As I thought, the trident pierced right through my shield, and it even went through my left arm.

Also, it penetrated further toward my left waist.

I ignored the pain.

As of now, I was able to do that.

My right arm was swung, and the Savage warrior’s backsword cleanly cut off Idaltaru’s left arm.

A lizard’s mouth, which had saw-like teeth, was coming right at me in front of my eyes.

Actually, I was going to make her use up her gaseous form transformation skill with this and finish the fight with the Talaria's Wing and Blink. However, Idaltaru did not use the skill to the very end.

[Blink]

I used Blink to fall back and gained a big distance between myself and her.

[Kuuuaaaaak!]

‘Does it hurt? It hurts for me as well.’

I cut off Idaltaru's left arm along the shoulder. Similarly, my left arm was pierced by the trident and had holes.

It was obvious this situation was an advantage to myself.

If the opponent was in pain like me, then I was at an advantage no matter what.

On top of that, Idaltaru's spear was still stuck on my arm.

I even took her weapon, so my attack, which was attempted with the intention of giving up an arm for it, could be considered as a definite success.

[Krurururu. You are too mean.]

Idaltaru held her left shoulder with her hand. Blood was gushing out of her left shoulder. She mumbled as she looked at her arm on the floor.

‘Mean, who is mean?’

You are the one with wacko brain who is taking things too far.’

[You just tried to kill me. If I was just a little bit slower, your sword would have been headed to my neck instead of my arm.]

She was right, so I didn’t say anything back to deny it.

[In that case, instead of seeing you as a mate, I’ll consider you as a foe that I should kill!]

Along with her shouting, the muscle on her entire body swelled up. Her body size grew almost twice her original size.

‘Is this the start of the phase two?’

[Kiaaaaaoooo!]

Kwang!!

Idaltaro stepped hard with her feet, and the entire floor cracked with spider-web like cracks.

‘... This is too strong?’

*

Kwang!!

I barely managed to dodge Idaltaru’s feet falling on me. I rolled and rolled to move away.

‘Oh my...

Does that make common sense?

This marble stone room is on the brink of completely collapsing.

Idaltaru lost her cool and she is going berserk. She is charging at me without any thoughts.’

She lost an arm and her trident. She was attacking out of instinct without any calculated thoughts, so it was not hard to dodge her.

However, every time I dodged her, the wall and the floor were destroyed.

It had not been ten minutes yet, but in that short duration, the boss room was turned to shambles. I wondered if the ceiling was going to collapse at any minute.

‘In a video game, a boss monster’s physical abilities suddenly getting boosted from going berserk is pretty common.’

So, when Idaltaru started to go mad and run amok, I didn’t think much of it other than that she really looked like a boss monster from a video game.

However...

Kwang!

[Kuwaaaaaaooooo!]

“Ugh... Ugh...”

I barely managed to dodge her punch.

My legs were starting to shiver, so my body ended up leaning on a wall nearby.

‘Hey, this is too much!

I merely had been running around to dodge her attacks, but I am

getting exhausted and it is hard to even catch my breath.

Just how long is that going to last?

At this rate, I'll be exhausted first.'

My speed was diminished quite a bit already, so I used Blink to dodge several times.

I only had two more chances for using Blink.

I had to make these two chances count somehow.

A fist was coming right at my face. I lowered my head quickly and dodged it.

Kwang!!!

Along with a sound of a cannon-like explosion, going past where my head was just now, Idaltaru's fist was planted on the wall.

As soon as I dodged her fist, I drew Gladius and aimed for her heart.

It was close, but Idaltaru's tail was swung at that moment.

I used the Talaria's Wing to counter it, but her tail threw my

entire body up into the air.

‘Fuck, I’ll really die like this.’

“Idy!”

While I was flying in the air, my will to survive spoke out without going through my brain’s filter.

‘Idy?’

Thanks to the Talaria’s Wing’s flight effect, I didn’t plummet to the floor. Instead, I was able to land safely.

Actually, I was able to land safely because Idaltaru stopped her attacks and just stared at me with a vacant look on her face.

‘Why is she like that?’

[Keruk. What is it, human? Did you finally change your mind or something?]

‘Idy...’

That was right. A while ago, she told me I could call her Idy.

It seemed I called her name unconsciously because I wanted to

live.

I got to recognize the strong will to survive in me that tried to live through this no matter what.

“... You... You are truly strong!”

‘So what now...

Damn it.

I have to think of the next line quickly.’

“Regardless of how you look outside, your inside is truly magnificent!”

‘You dumbass, what you just said to her ultimately means you are trying to say she is ugly outside!’

[... So what is it that you want to say, human!]

‘Damn it... I don’t have a watch, but I feel like I can actually hear the sound of a watch ticking. It is making me anxious about time.

Battle Focus!

Actually, I already have used it.

So why is the time passing so fast!

I had to think about what to say next.

I don't know when that lunatic lizard was going to lose her cool and charge at me again.

I really don't have time anymore.'

"Give me time! Please give me time!"

'That's not a bad line.

It is the perfect line to use if it is difficult to refuse the confession at the spot. It is the best one to just wing it and escape the scene.

It's a line I have heard twice from girls I confessed to when I was in college.'

[Time? What for?]

"Because of your sudden declaration of interest in me as your mate, my mind is in too much of disarray. I need time to reflect on myself!"

'If I ever go back to the reality, I think I should go and personally

thank the girls from college who rejected me. They told me such useful lines.'

[How long... do you need?]

Idaltaru's voice quickly became calm.

I was surprised to see this. Only a moment ago, she was a hulk lizard who was running amok while having lost her mind. Now, she was so calm when I only said I will think about it for a moment.

'I wonder just how much does this lizard likes me?

Could it be that my face's shape is considered ultra-gorgeous among the lizard's standard?

Anyway, I did it.'

"Just a moment... I just need a moment."

After saying that, I pulled out the long spear that was stuck on my arm.

'God damn it. It was excruciating having had to run around with this stuck on my arm.'

Blood gushed out like fountain every time I made a quick movement.

Thanks to that, my bleeding resistance went up by one. However, that was not making me feel better at this moment.

I used inventory, brought out the stamina potion and healing potion and drank them.

While I was drinking the potions, I fixated my eyes at Idaltaru.

That lizard was not attacking me right now because she was insane.

Also, she should not be trusting me for having made a promise to an insane lizard.

Having drank all of the potions, I haphazardly put away the empty bottles to the inventory. I grabbed hold of the backsword.

[Are you done now? Have you finished thinking about it?]

“Wait a minute. I need to perform a human ritual to focus my mind.”

I just made that up for now.

I aimed the backsword to the front and took a neutral stance.

It was a stance that was supposed to be done with both hands on the sword, so it was a little uncomfortable with the backsword which was meant to be used with just one hand.

Also, the sword had quite a curvature, so the stance was hard to maintain.

Huup.

I took a deep breath in and then focused.

This was a difficult technique. Even when I practiced it at the waiting room, my chance of failure was over 90%.

Moreover, if I failed, there was going to be an immediate counter.

From the neutral stance, I slowly raised my sword and took a raised sword stance.

Figuring out ways to use Blink in offensive measures had always been a big homework for me.

I have tried a body charge attack with Blink once, and it resulted in too severe of shock to my body.

In the end, only way to utilize Blink offensively was with Talaria's Wing.

However, I did have one more way to use it offensively.

It was using a weapon.

‘Just making the weapon collide with the opponent with Blink is not going to be enough. If I am going to do that, I might as well use Talaria's Wing. That would be better.

However, if I managed to combine Blink with a chest cut, the speed of the sword swing and Blink's movement power...

At the moment just before Blink arrives at the target location, literally just before that critical moment, just before the momentum from Blink's movement disappears, if I could swing the sword while carrying all that momentum and cut the target...

I thought about the distance between me and Idaltaru and Blink's timing as I struck down the sword.

After that...

[Blink]

Booooong...

Along with that wind sound, the backsword chopped off Idaltaru's body.

However, Idaltaru did not incur any injury from my attack.

She transformed her body into black smoke and dodged my sword.

However, her face was filled with a perplexed look. As for my face, it was filled with a sense of relief.

This technique had one thing that was superior to the Talaria's Wing and Blink combination.

It was the fact that I did not have to charge in with my body.

When I arrived at the destination of my Blink, as soon as the movement was completed, all momentum disappeared with it, which was a characteristic of the Blink skill.

After this, I was able to leisurely prepare for the next attack.

[Talaria's Wing]

After waiting for a moment, Idaltaru's body, which was turned to black smoke earlier, had turned back to normal.

[Blink]

Kwang!!

As soon as her body returned to normal, I used Blink and charged in with the Talaria's Wing.

However, just before the moment I used Blink, she grabbed on to my ankle with her tail. So I ended up rolling with her instead.

The shock from the Blink was absorbed by the Talaria's Wing. However, while I was rolling with my ankle grabbed by Idaltaru's tail, I ended up hitting my head on the floor a few times.

Like that...

I lost my consciousness.

*

“Kuuuuk.”

‘Is it this pattern again?’

I turned my head and looked at Idaltaru.

Her body was not showing any movement, even a small one.

Her body was in middle of a pool of blood.

‘Actually, since she had been running around like that with her arm cut off, she must have bleed a lot.’

I ended up in a beat up state again, but still, I survived somehow, and I felt relieved from that.

‘I think it has been a while since I gone on a swimming in the Styx and returned.’

Um... My body was still not moving as I wanted.

‘For now, I think I should wait until my body can move as I want. I should drink another potion from the inventory.’

Actually, I just need to ride the portal.

Since my body won’t move... I should use Blink and get to the portal.

I already have used all five allowances for Blink, so I should wait a bit.

I am not in a good condition, but it is not so critical that I would die from bleeding while I wait for the cooling time for the Blink to pass.

I should just sit tight, relax and wait...?

Wait a minute...

... My body is supposed to be recovered automatically after beating a boss room.

There was no clear message either.'

[Kurururururu]

I felt creeped out. My hair spiked up from the chill. I slowly turned my head and looked at Idaltaru again.

Idaltaru's face was painted in blood. She raised her head up and was glaring at me.

[Human, you are so cruel.]

[You are too cruel. You really have gone too far... You are atrocious.]

Chapter 48 - Tutorial 5th Floor (4)

[Kurururu... Human, you cannot move anymore. Now I can do as I wish.]

I felt my heart sink. I was terrified.

That lizard was dying while gushing out blood like that. Still, it seemed her head was filled with thoughts of wanting to do something to me.

“Just kill me! You lunatic lizard!”

[Kuk. Kuk. I won't kill you. I will take you as my husband.]

Oh my...

That lizard's sex drive was... No, her obsession with having a spare husband was just out there.

Idaltaru slowly crawled her way across the floor towards me.

It seemed that it was difficult for her to move as well. She was crawling on the floor using her remaining arm.

When I was in middle school, I was absolutely shocked and terrified from watching a scene from a horror movie where a girl with long hair that covered her face had crawled out of a well.

With that scene stuck in my head, I was scared to sleep every night for the week after.

However, the terrifying sight in front of me at this very moment was... It felt like the memory could never fade even after decades.

Idaltaru was slow, but she didn't stop. She continued to crawl towards me.

‘What should I do now?

Should I bite my tongue and die to protect my virginity?

No. It was not time to worry about keeping my virginity yet.

I needed to get a grip.

Let's think about what I can do at this moment.

My head could still think.

My hand... My right hand could still move.

I wasn't certain about my shoulder, but I definitely can feel up to the elbow at least.

Ways I could attack...

I used all of my Blink allowances.

I still needed to wait until it can be used again.

I still had Talaria's Wing.

God's power skills did not require my stamina or mana.

I could use it just fine.

Are there any weapons left...

Damn it... I could almost see the handgun that I had handed over to Park Jung-ah.

I opened the inventory and checked to see if there were any weapons that I could bring out and use immediately.

I had a hook and a heat stone.

Could I use... the hook?

I think the heat stone would be better.

This hook was to be used with a rope, so its tip was too dull.

Lizardman was basically a type of reptile.

It had to be.

Reptiles were cold blooded, so they are weak against changes in temperature.

That's right. The heat stone was the one.

Just you try to come and touch me.

I'm going to shove this lump of flame into your neck.'

I brought out the heat stone from the inventory and held it in my right hand to hide in.

It was exuding high temperatures of heat, so I felt pain in my palm. However, I could manage to not bat an eye from the pain caused by a burn like this.

After getting a hold of myself and making a plan, it felt like even my eyesight was clear and focused again.

Idaltaru was still crawling towards me...

[Kururu...]

I realized something that I didn't know until just a moment ago.

Idaltaru was, even while she was crawling, mumbling something endlessly on her own.

[Kururu... I'm going to make you my husband.]

‘That’s what you were mumbling about!’

I tightly held onto the heat stone and watched Idaltaru crawl towards me.

Before long, she came near where I was.

While feeling the heat from the heat stone on my right hand, I focused on Idaltaru's movements.

Idaltaru was crawling toward me at a constant speed. However, all of sudden, her speed decreased, and then she stopped, unable to move her arm.

It seemed she also had reached her limit.

Considering the damage she sustained from my attacks and the stamina she exhausted from running amok until now, it was a

miracle that she was still alive and moving like that in the first place.

However, it seemed this was the end.

It was fortunate for me.

[Keruk. Keruk. You said you think I am strong and magnificent.]

[You didn't speak badly of me. You didn't call me a coward. You didn't say my combat style is underhanded. You didn't curse me or called me a servant of the devil. You acknowledged me.]

[I have waited a very long time. I finally met a partner. Although you are a human of short stature, you are a strong male. I most definitely will...]

[I am going to have you as my husband...]

To the very end's end, she mumbled things that was making my backbone overcome with spookiness and chill. In the end, in that crawling pose, her breathing stopped.

She was so close that she could reach my body if she extended her arm towards me.

'That runt... Could it be that she had been shunned by her own kind?

She possessed a special ability. She had a defensive tendency that was not typical of lizardmen. Also, she had the title that contained the word, 'stealthy.'

I somehow felt that it must have been the case for her.

It must have been the reason why she showed such a big response to my praises and was overjoyed.

I felt bitter. I felt sorry.

Of course, if she was still alive, I would have tried to kill her in any way I could.

Even if she had her circumstances, I didn't want to mate with her.

I dropped the heat stone that I had been holding in my right hand. I clapped my palm on the floor and dusted it off.

I wiggled my body to crawl a little towards her and then extended my right hand.

She still had her yellow eyes wide open and was looking at me. I closed her eyes for her.

'I am sorry.

If I knew about this, I would not have tried to talk to you at all.

Actually, this sense of guilt was meaningless.

I knew that, but I still felt sorry.

Her way was wrong to begin with, and it was a relationship that could never be.

[You have cleared Tutorial, Hell difficulty, Fifth Floor.]

[You are healed of all injuries and status effects.]

[You have received 1000 points for clearing the Floor.]

[You have received 1000 points for being the first to clear the Floor.]

[You cleared more than one floor during a round. You received 1000 points as an extra reward.]

[Many gods are pleased with your actions. You have received 4700 points.]

[Many gods are displeased with your actions. 3200 points are

deducted.]

[An additional reward is given according to your performance.]

[Many gods would like to gift you with a skill instead of an additional reward.]

[Votes: 74 yes, 3 no]

[Would you like to accept?]

‘Something feels off. There was definitely a trick hidden here.

A gift from many gods was different from the power skill from a god.

Last time, the gift I got through this was the knowledge of the time before Babel.

It certainly was a useful skill, but the intent of the gods that gifted me with the skill must have been...

It is obvious that it was to test the skill.

Could it be they were just curious about about I would respond to

it? Perhaps they did it just for fun of watching me use it?

I could not figure out their true intent. However, it seemed the skill was not given to me with intention of wanting to help me.

Moreover, because of the gods who were displeased with me, the deduction in my points was 3200, which was staggering.

Also, 74 gods voted yes for this skill gift.

When I received the knowledge before the time of Babel, 12 gods voted yes. Considering that, this means many gods wanted to give me this exact skill.

I didn't feel safe about this.

Still, it would be awkward to refuse the gift as well.

Refusing the gift feels like it will lead to more gods being displeased with me. Also, what if it was a good skill?

Let's just get it for now.

“Yes.”

[You acquired Dead Summoning Lv.???)

I was both anxious and excited with anticipation. Both sensations were rising up.

‘Let’s check what it is first.’

“Status Window.’

[Lee Ho-jae (human)]

Lv. 10

Strength: 24

Dexterity: 39

Vitality: 28

Mana: 28

Skill: Battle Focus Lv.11 Willpower Lv.5 Awakening Lv.1 Night Vision Lv.2 Bright Vision Lv.1 Charge Lv.2 Sneak Lv.4 Natural Regeneration Lv.2 Improved Senses Lv.7 Increased Field of Vision Lv.1 Toughened Skin Lv.3 Basic Swordsmanship Lv.7 Basic Shield Skill Lv.4 Basic Hand to Hand Skill Lv.3 Basic Throwing Skill Lv.1 Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv.2 Knowledge of

the Time before Babel Lv.5 Mind Corruption Immunity Lv.1
Pain Resistance Lv.11 Bleed Resistance Lv.5 Faint Resistance
Lv.3 Pierce Resistance Lv.2 Poison resistance Lv.4 Paralysis
Resistance Lv.6 Heat Resistance Lv.4 Burn Resistance Lv.7 Cold
Resistance Lv.4 Frostbite Resistance Lv.3 Blink Emblem Lv.Max
Talaria's Wings Lv.Max, Dead Summoning Lv.???

Extra: God of Slowness has concerned look.

[Dead Summoning (Lv.???)]

Description: This is a power of a nameless god. This god refused to reveal the name to the challengers.

Using an item that contains a part of the dead's soul as the medium, you can summon the dead for a fixed duration.

This power has a limit imposed by the god.

Number of times it can be done (5/5)

An incredible skill came up.

‘To think I can summon a dead being back to life...

This goes beyond being a skill that was similar to one from a video game. This belonged in the realm of miracles.

Was it alright to have a ridiculous skill like this show up in this place?

Also, this skill had nothing to do with the Fifth Floor.

Just what were they thinking...

Before long I realized and I looked at Idaltaru's corpse.

Her corpse was fading and disappearing, and there was a green stone that appeared above her corpse.

[Lizardman Idaltaru's Soul Stone]

Description: Of all lizardmen living in the Iden swamp, she is the strongest and unluckiest warrior. This is her spirit stone.

You can sell this at the store.

'It's not that they gifted me this skill to revive Idaltaru, right? If I revive her, she will charge at me and say she will want to make me her husband.

As long as I am in the right mind, that's never going to happen again.'

[God of Slowness is relieved.]

[God of Adventure is disappointed.]

[God of Philanthropy is resenting you.]

[God of Destruction is bored.]

[God of Duel is strongly criticizing you.]

‘... Let’s just ignore them.

As I thought, even these gods are not normal.’

I forced myself to ignore the messages and put my hand on the portal, and before long, I was teleported.

I arrived at the green plains that made my heart feel at ease as always. As soon as I got there, I could hear Kiri Kiri’s voice.

“Hmp! This time, you were so mean! Howjae!”

‘Give it a break, will you guys.’

“Hey! What else could I have done? Should I have mated with the lizard there then?”

“Hmp!”

*

Kiri Kiri was refusing to talk to me. To ease her anger, I needed to use a piece of cake.

I handed her a piece of cake. Although Kiri Kiri looked pissed, now she started to smile big again.

“The gods suddenly showed interest because it was a very rare event in the Tutorial.”

Kiri Kiri said as if it was obvious. She said it with cake creams around her mouth.

‘Event? You guys consider that an event?’

Putting my virginity in danger is an event for you guys?’

“Heng. You are probably the first one ever to be proposed by the gate keeper of the Fifth Floor.”

‘Sure. It probably is rare for a warm blooded to be proposed by a

cold blooded.

Damn it all.'

... Anyway, I had something I was curious about.

I had been curious about this for sometime, but I was more sure about this after having fought Idaltaru and other lizardmen.

"No."

'You... You are reading my mind now?'

"Uum. That is something I am not supposed to let you know."

Having said that, Kiri Kiri pressed down her large ears and then tightly closed her eyes.

'It is not like you are not going to be able to hear things by doing that.'

"There probably are other dimensions or planets besides Earth. Both goblins and lizardmen had their own civilizations and societies. They actually exist in the real world or used to exist. Their entire regions have been brought to the Tutorial, or their worlds have been copied into Tutorial. Also, there are other Tutorials in other dimensions. That's probably why a comment like 'this is the first time' or whatever came up. Attitudes that you

managers and gods have clearly show that Earth is not where the very first Tutorials showed up. Also, the monsters that have appeared on Earth are also...”

Kiri Kiri wasn't moving at all. She was completely petrified.

She was like a stone statue. She was like a drawing on a painting canvas.

She was not showing any response.

It was enough to make me wonder if it was possible for a living being to stay absolutely still like that.

“... Tsk. Nevermind. I'm sorry.”

Kiri Kiri moved immediately.

“Heng. You merely told me your guesses, so it does not matter. However, you must not seriously try to gain information from me based on my responses. If you try it repeatedly, my attitude towards you will change.”

“All right. I won't anymore.”

There was an incident like this before.

I asked her what happens to the people who died in the Tutorial. Back then, she gave me the answer with the same look on her face.

That response was not because Kiri Kiri was not good at hiding her emotions or expressions.

As always, it was a bonus out of consideration for me.

Kiri Kiri had always been trying her best to give me useful information and help me.

I felt like I threw away her good will.

“I am sorry.”

‘I am sorry towards many today.’

*

“Still, think about it again.”

“Are you being serious?”

“I am not saying you should do as she wants. You can talk to her. If you are successful in convincing her, she might become a good ally for you.”

‘Honestly, I am not confident about convincing Idaltaru. Let alone convincing her, just calming her down would be impossible.’

“I’ll get going now. As for the items, I’ll buy them next time after collecting points.”

I wanted to change the shield into something a little better.

However, because of negative responses from the gods, I lost a lot of the points.

I could purchase a little better shield only if I collected more points by clearing the Sixth Floor.

I was about to head to the portal, but Kiri Kiri grabbed me.

“Buy some potions at least.”

“Potions? I still have plenty of them?”

“Ah... You may not have enough?”

I opened the inventory and checked the number of potions I had.

I had plenty.

So far, I have never ended up regretting buying things that Kiri

Kiri recommended.

I was sure it would be the same this time.

‘She said I’ll need a lot more potions... I wonder what the theme is for the next floor.’

I was going to learn about it when I got there.

As Kiri Kiri asked, I purchased potions using all of the points I had.

“Be careful! Come back soon! No, you won’t be able to come back soon, but still, come back soon!”

Her words felt ominous somehow. Listening to her escort me on my way out of the green plains, I got onto the portal.

*

[Before you enter the Sixth Stage, please select the party members.]

[Your current party members (1/5)]

1. Lee Ho-jae

Chapter 49 - Tutorial 6th Floor (1)

[Really? Are you serious?]

[That's right. I really don't know what to do about the Sixth Floor. Just relax and think.]

[... Really?]

*

[Round Three, Day 28, 03:10]

I arrived at the waiting room at the Sixth Floor. As a test, I tried putting my hand inside the portal for the Sixth Floor's Stage.

After that, I realized why Kiri Kiri said I won't be able to come back soon.

I also realized why she told me to buy more potions.

[Before you enter the Stage, select your party members.]

[Current party members (1/5)]

- Lee Ho-jae

This stage involved team play.

Usually, in a game, it took at least two people. Sometimes, it took as many as several dozens of people.

It seemed I needed up to five people.

But it wasn't like there was anyone that could team up with me at this moment.

[People that could join (1/1)]

- Lee Ho-jae

Of course, it was not possible to form the party with people from other difficulties or floors.

It had to be challengers from the Sixth Floor.

Currently, at this Sixth Floor in the Hell Difficulty, and in the Hell Difficulty itself, I was the only one in it.

‘This is thoughtless. Why would anyone think five or more people can make it to the Six Floor in Hell Difficulty alive?’

As I cleared the Tutorial floors, I have heard many times that the whole thing was flawed from the design.

One thing that got brought up the most by the people was the clear condition.

Also, the theme for this floor was clearly a design flaw.

Seriously, if they were going to design something, they should have put some thoughts into it.

I did not know who designed this Tutorial. However, I figured the gods probably did.

‘In hiding, they watch what other people are doing whole day. Their heads must be full of expectation of watching someone mating. These gods must be very ill mentally.

How could they... Damn it.’

[God of Adventure feels wronged.]

‘You have nothing to feel wronged.

As soon as I thought that I would never bring Idaltaru back to live, the God of Adventure sent me that message.

That one is the worst.

I think that one is watching me whole day.

Does this god have anything better to do?

If the Gods of the Tutorial have human forms like the gods from Rome, I bet this one looks like one of jobless, perverted, old middle-aged man.

I bet he has gigantic thighs the size of a wine barrel and his legs are hairy.'

[God of Adventure is shocked about your comments. God of Adventure is panicking.]

Ugh...

I sighed big.

‘Well, what can I do.

All I can say is that the situation cannot be helped.

I am the one who committed the greatest sin of selecting the Hell Difficulty when I saw the invitation message into the Tutorial.’

I have heard before that the Sixth Floor on the Normal difficulty has cooperative play.

The news caused quite a stir in the Community.

There was merit in the fact that people could challenge the floor with others.

There were challengers who were determined to get there at least.

There were others who promised with each other to meet again in the Sixth Floor instead of the day of the great harmony. This was back in the days when there were not much information about the day of the great harmony.

With the party play introduced to the Tutorial, the discussion about the weapons and each individual’s direction of development became big topics of discussion again.

The introduction of party play was a huge issue. As big of an issue

it was, I was well aware of it.

However, I didn't think that party play would get introduced in the Hell Difficulty.

In the Hell Difficulty, let alone anyone in the Sixth Floor, there wasn't any challengers even in the First Floor. The idea of party play in Hell Difficulty was ridiculous.

[Would you like to enter?]

Fortunately, it was possible to continue by myself.

If it was made to be impossible to continue at all without five party members, I would have had to wait here until four more challengers made it to the Sixth Floor without knowing when that would happen.

'Damn it. I guess this means I need to clear the stage by myself. I need to do five people's worth of work.'

I thought about an AOS game where doing five people's worth of work was the condition of the victory.

Doing five people's worth... It was easy to say it out loud. However...

This time, it was not about picking up the slacks for some nobodies.

I had to do five people's worth for the Sixth Floor in the Hell Difficulty.

‘Is this going to be possible to do at all?’

I was the only challenger here.

‘If there were many challengers here at the Sixth Floor in the Hell Difficulty, I wonder how I would rank among them?’

I am probably above average. I am certain.

I am confident about that at least.’

According to Kiri Kiri, I was able to obtain the power skill because of a special characteristic that the God of Slowness possessed. She said I would not have been able to obtain it if it was not for that.

I personally thought that the God of Adventure panicked and also gave me a power skill just because the God of Slowness gave me one.

Also, as for my combat skills, I had gotten used to battles from

clearing previous floors. Regardless of my stats, I never felt I was lacking in combat skills.

My decisiveness, ability to make good judgments, creativity, focus, will to fight, adaptability, reflex, and determination...

I was definitely superior when it came to the characteristics necessary for combat.

I was confident that I would be on the top group even if they lined up six billion people, the entire population of Earth.

I had confidence in myself. This remained unchanged since my professional gamer days.

‘Still, am I strong enough to handle five challengers at the Sixth Floor in Hell Difficulty?

Hm...

Let’s find out.’

[Welcome to the Sixth Floor’s Stage.]

It was a stone room. It was narrow and confined.

Inside the room, there were just a small bonfire and two portals.

One led to the waiting room.

The other one led to...

[Would you like to challenge the trial?]

In the Community, I have heard of a floor that had this kind of setting.

The entire floor was probably made of just this one trial.

This stone room, which I'll refer as the bonfire room from now on for convenience, gave the time and space for the people to check each other and make plans for the trial before entering the stage.

The place was sealed off and safe. Also, because there was a magical bonfire here, this place garnered special interest in the Community on its own, aside from the fact that this place was related to the party play.

The magic bonfire never withered. There was no danger of the fire spreading either. It didn't generate smokes.

It was possible to make simple meals using this bonfire. People

just needed to purchase uncooked meat or vegetables.

When the information about this spread, many challengers said they just want to get to the Sixth Floor and settle there.

Even I thought for a moment about trying making a meal here.

‘Um... Let’s try later. Later...

Besides, I’m good at making fire with the heat stone. I don’t need that bonfire.’

[Would you like to challenge the trial?]

I used the portal again and teleported.

It was a dark, narrow corridor.

It reminded me of the corridor from the First Floor.

As I went further up to the higher floors, the corridors became wider and taller.

However, the corridor at the Sixth Floor was as narrow as the First Floor.

One notable thing about the place was that there was a gigantic stone door on the opposite end.

Usually, at the opposite end of the corridor's entrance, there were just a dead end and a portal for the waiting room. Instead, at the Sixth Floor, there was a stone door.

‘What is this?

Does it lead to the back?’

A message appeared when I touched the stone door.

[You cannot exit.]

‘Exit?

Is it supposed to be a door that leads to outside?’

While I diligently rolled my brain about it, a message appeared to resolve my curiosity.

Just like when entering a boss room, the message appeared to explain the trial.

It seemed the entire floor was made of just this one trial.

‘Let’s just read it first.’

[Sixth Floor Trial is starting now.]

Explanation: It already has been over 50 years since the cursed priests of the Bahare Sect had been pursued by the Pantheon. As you already know, The Bahare Sect is an evil organization that seeks to reap more death by reviving the dead people and turning their souls into evil spirits.

Including Khezas, their leader, there are 16 priests. They managed to lose the Pantheon’s pursuit and successfully arrive at the heart of the white mountain range.

The place is also called the land of the god, a place where a god resided in the past.

The Bahare Sect priests are trying to cover the world in nightmare using the remains of holy artifacts.

Brave warriors, stop them until the holy knights of the Pantheon arrives. You are our only hope.

[Condition of success.]

1. Stop the death army from entering the white mountain range until the holy knights arrive.
2. Destroy the death army and 16 priests.

‘Brave warriors my ass...

I guess the difficulty for this floor will depend on the number and strength of the death army.

It won’t be easy.’

This was Hell Difficulty, so it was obvious.

‘Now, let’s get this straight.

That stone door behind me... I need to stop the death army from reaching there. I can either stop the death army or just destroy the army and the priests all together. These are the conditions of success for this trial.

Death army.

It looks like they are going to fight to the death and until I get

sick of them.

Still, fortunately, the corridor is narrow.

The ceiling is low, so I have to give up aerial combat using the Talaria's Wings. Still, a narrow corridor is advantageous for fighting many enemies.

It looks like it will be hard to clear this within the time left in Round Three.

One of the conditions of success is holding out until the holy knights arrived.

The description did not specify when the holy knights are going to arrive. Still, they probably won't arrive in just a day.

I don't know. It could be two days or even a week.

Let's just go meet this death army then?'

*

From the stone door, I walked for about four hours. I was finally able to see what the enemies looked like.

Step, step, step...

They were just marching, but it was generating incredibly loud noise.

It was unbelievable.

‘There are several thousand, several tens of thousand skulls marching in order.

What do I do...’

The description said the Bahare Sect revived the dead. As expected, the army was made of skeletons.

They were rotting skeletons wearing rotting armors.

Honestly, they didn’t look all that strong.

Their weapons were mostly some kind of sharp objects. However, I couldn’t see any that could really work well.

Their weapons were dull and were missing edges here and there.

The skeletons were made of just thin bones. I didn’t feel any robustness or power in their movement.

The corridor was narrow.

‘Regardless of the death army’s number, I just need to fight about six of them in front of me at once.

I don’t feel so threatened about fighting six of them at a time.

Still... there are...

I cannot see the end of them.’

I jumped to the top of the corridor to see the end of the marching army. However, even from above, I couldn’t see the tail end.

‘It looks like they could be over several tens of thousands.

The priests might be like necromancers. It is possible that those skeletons are being made continuously right now.

What if the land of the god’s power is giving something like an unlimited magic power to them?

... I can’t even fathom. That would be horrible.

If that is the case, that means I have to destroy the skeletons a lot faster than the rate which they are being generated.

I get why Kiri Kiri said I wouldn’t be able to come back soon.

This difficulty was definitely beyond my abilities.

It's a matter of my endurance and speed.

It would be definitely impossible to clear it within the Round Three, which has less than two days left. I may not be able to clear it within Round Four or Five.'

I organized my thoughts and brought out the savage warrior's backsword.

'I don't think using a sword with sharp edge would mean anything. These bastards don't have flesh or muscles. They are nothing but bones.

Instead of Gladius, it would be better to use a blunt weapon like the backsword.'

[Talaria's Wings]

When the gigantic wings opened, the narrow corridor was completely blocked.

'Fortunately, the corridor is narrow, so the skulls won't be able to sneak past me and get to the stone door.

I'm fighting many enemies.

Judging from their numbers, it does not look like individual skeletons are very strong.

Let's just try fighting them.'

*

Bam!

Using the backsword, I cross-cut a skeleton soldier in front of me.

No, I shattered the skeleton.

Along with a crushing sound, the skeleton soldier's head was shattered.

These bastards' weakpoint was the head.

'Actually, maybe I shouldn't call it their weak point?'

These bastards kept on moving when I broke other parts of their body.

When one was left with just the head, it came to bit me while clicking its teeth.

'I need to shatter their head, one by one.'

I shattered one of the skeleton soldier's head. I grabbed the body by the ribs and threw it to the front.

Other skeleton soldiers charged in immediately.

I swung my shield and haphazardly pushed them off. I charged toward a skeleton soldier that had a helmet with a feather attached.

Occasionally, there were ones with armors in relatively better condition.

These bastards were not foot soldiers. They were commanding officers.

[Gyaaaaaaaaa!]

'Damn it.

I was too late.'

[Gyaaaaaaaaa!]

[Gyaaaaaaaaa!]

When the commander skeleton screamed, several thousands of skeleton soldiers also screamed in beastly roar.

Their eyes showed steady glow. The weapons on their hands showed dark energy surrounding them.

‘Damn it. I don’t have any more room to fall back.’

When I first encountered the skeleton army, it happened far away from the stone door, about four hours of walk from there.

After that, with two days of continuous battle, I ended up being pushed back all the way here.

Instead of destroying 16 priests, I couldn’t even handle the skeleton soldiers. Their numbers never seemed to end even though I smashed and smashed countless number of them all this time.

‘I’m already pushed all the way to the stone door. The skeleton soldiers now even have some kind of boosts. I can't stop them anymore.’

In the end, few skeleton soldiers got past me and reached the stone door.

[You failed clearing the trial.]

[Round Three is ending.]

Chapter 50 - Tutorial 60th Floor (Part 5)

I mumbled a song as I cleaned the incubator's glass window.

I didn't really have to clean the glass, but I wanted to observe the egg beyond the glass a little clearly.

I forgot about the content of the letter for a moment since the letter gave me a headache. Focusing on cleaning the incubator refreshed how I felt.

The incubator was larger than a king sized bed. At the center of the circular shaped incubator, there was a dragon egg.

It was the egg that I purchased through the auction.

It was going to take a little more time before it hatched. Also, there were a few more conditions that needed to be met.

Still, I had been staring at the egg whole day, wondering if the egg was going to move or not, wondering if there was anything odd.

The last owner of the egg didn't know how to make the egg hatch, so the owner placed it on the auction. However, I was different.

I also didn't know how to make it hatch.

However, I gave points to the easy difficulty challengers to inquire the managers.

‘Ha!

There’s nothing you cannot do if you have a lot of points.

Points are the best.’

I fully prepared all items I was going to need after the dragon hatched.

I was going to bathe the dragon in elixir as soon as it hatched.

I was going to provide it with various passive skills. I was also going to give it a blessing so it won’t have health problems.

Its drinking water also had to be diluted elixir. I was going to make the food for it by crushing great earthworm with spirit’s byproduct.

I even prepared a gigantic mixing machine for making the baby food.

The fairy lavas, which were to be fed to the dragon once it grew up a little, were hard to obtain because fairies were so rare.

I made a place at a corner of the residential area. I had been diligently increasing the number of the lavas there.

I even prepared a huge, lavish nest and toys for intellectual development.

There was a chance the baby dragon would not follow me as its parent. So, just in case, I even learned polymorph magic.

I was going to take care of the baby dragon while in the state of being morphed into a dragon.

I was concerned the baby dragon might feel awkward about the fact that I don't have a dragon heart. So, I made a dragon heart and installed it inside my body.

I even practiced and perfected natural movements while being morphed into a dragon.

Fortunately, I was pretty used to reptiles and other similar beings.

I never knew that the time I spent with her and the knowledge learned from her would be used this way.

Preparations were perfect.

I just needed to wait until that baby dragon to wake up.

Hm...

Everything was going too perfectly. A sensation of pure bliss was rushing at me.

It felt like everything was going to work out just fine if I just relaxed and waited like this.

It felt like I no longer needed to agonize over things or suffer.

Of course, the world never work that smoothly, especially in this Hell Difficulty.

Still, I tried hard to be positive and be happy.

I finished cleaning the incubator. While I was resting and drinking a cup of coffee, a message alarm rang.

It had a familiar name.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: What is it?]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: What else? I'm contacting you before I get going. The Round is about to start soon.]

I thought this guy was going to stay at the 30th Floor in Normal Difficulty forever.

I wondered if he was going to grow old there, but in the end, he was about to get out of the Tutorial.

‘Now that I think about it, it must be quite surreal to him.

He swore that he was going to spend the rest of his life in Tutorial, but he is about to leave.’

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: It’s a little hard for me to believe it, but it is not to the point of being anxious. I am going to live a quiet life outside anyway.]

‘I am sure you would.

That guy isn’t going to run around to kill monsters.

Instead, he probably will show up on the news.

... Along with politicians.

Korea was the top country that produced greatest Awakened warriors in the world, and he was the man who led the Korean Server since its initial establishment.

Other countries were trying to figure out the reason behind the Korean Awakeneds' strength by examining the atmosphere, rules and system inside Korean Tutorial.

Kim Min-huk also had plenty of great connections.

Many people were going to call for him.

If he stayed in Korea, he was going to be treated like a royalty. He would be offered huge sums of contract. He would also be offered all sorts of special entitlements. Moreover, he could take the world of politics by storm.

Many famous Awakeneds were slowly moving into the politics.

Kim Min-huk said he was going to live a quiet life. I doubted the world was going to let him be.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: It's too bad. If there was going to be a day of the great harmony, I could at least see you before you go.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: It's fine. It's not like the day of the great harmony happens for a good reason. I would rest easier with it not happening.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Really? I thought they were not so bad after the first one?]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: That's because you didn't do any work, you rascal. While you were sitting around doing nothing, we solved things by working our butts off.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: That's not true. I worked too.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Sitting on a corner, you had been inflicting injuries on your body to increase passive skills. You are not referring to that as work, are you? Well... Back then, you were helpful even when you just stood there yawning with your hands to the back.]

‘... I cannot beat him on this topic no matter how long we continue.

I should move on to the next topic.’

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Still, it is too bad. I heard another day of great harmony is going to happen soon.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Really? When?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: You don't know?]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Of course I don't, you rascal. It's been a while since I quit the Order of Vigilance.]

‘That makes sense. He is like a soldier on the last days before the

retirement. I guess it is possible that information related to work would not get delivered to him.'

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Does Jung-ah know?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Probably.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: In that case, it probably won't happen, as usual.]

The day of the great harmony, unlike its peaceful name, happened only when there was a serious problem in the Tutorial.

So, the information about the day of the great harmony happening soon served as an alarm that something problematic was happening inside Tutorial.

As soon as the information about the day of the great harmony happening was spread, the Order of Vigilance made the move, and the problem was solved.

When the problem was solved, the day of the great harmony did not happen.

It was unfortunate.

It was not like they could just let the problem be so the day of the great harmony could happen.

Actually, many people wanted the Order to just let the problem be so the day of the great harmony could happen.

They were mostly the people who wanted to meet families or friends who got scattered inside the Tutorial.

However, the Order of Vigilance, Park Jung-ah to be precise, did not listen.

‘Another day of the great harmony probably won’t come until the day Park Jung-Ah clear the Tutorial and leave.’

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Hey, since the topic came up, I got to ask. Are you guys still the same as always?]

‘The same as always?’

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: That’s right.]

‘Of course it is.’

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: I thought there was plenty of time to think about things. Isn’t it about time you guys joined up again?]

‘Um...

This is not something that an answer would just come up because I had the time to think.

Besides...

Even if we made up, what is going to change?

Nothing.

As long as I'm stuck here...

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Once I leave Tutorial, who else is left that can talk to her with ease? It is hard now as it is, so why don't you help out?]

[Lee Hojae, 60th Floor: What are you babbling about? Are you the matchmaker? Moreover, are you in position to do that?]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: You rascal.... I'm trying to help, yet you can't just sit quietly and accept it. Tsk. Still, think about it again. It looks like Jung-ah is interested.]

‘Jung-ah is?

Something is off.

I bet this rascal said the same thing to Jung-ah before he

contacted me.

I bet he did only with a different name.

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: That's not it, you rascal.]

I sent a message to Park Jung-ah to satisfy my curiosity.

I couldn't stand it if I had something I was curious about.

There was no message back from her.

Instead, Kim Min-huk responded.

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Hey! You poked at it right away? Jung-ah sent me shit load of insults.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Ki ki ki ki ki...]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: What's so funny? You thoughtless rascal. Is it past the time for your medicine?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: My resistance skills are so high that I can't take things like medicines. Ki ki ki.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: I really need to do something about this rascal...]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I'll try talking to Jung-ah later. By any chance, if the day of the great harmony does not get canceled, I'll talk to her face to face.]

‘It means I am not going to talk to her.’

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: If the day of the great harmony really happens, I guess you can see that newbie too. Many have high hopes for her. Just who is she? She is breaking through the Hell Difficulty.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: There were a few that made that far. She is still only at the Sixth Floor. Don't get her all worked up with false sense of confidence.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: I won't of course. Still, she knows how to handle it. Unlike others...]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Yeah. Although she is not as good as me.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: You were just a special case. She got to the Sixth Floor in ten rounds. That's quite fast. How long did it take you to get to the Sixth Floor?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Was it around Round Three?]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: You are a fiend. Seriously. Although it

would be hard to compare to you, this newbie has plenty of talent. Don't be so anxious.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I know, but I don't know how long it will take from the Sixth Floor. Also, of all things, she is an archer.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Do you think she can get through?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Probably. If it looks like she will never be able to get through the floor, I'm thinking about giving her items so she can.]

'Honestly, if I sensed that Lee Youn-hye didn't stand a good chance since the First Floor, I would have helped her move up by showering her with items.

Even if someone is terrible at this, getting to the Tenth Floor is possible with items.

With some incredible luck, getting to even the 30th Floor is possible with items.

Just like how they do it in some of other countries.'

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: So, well... I'm sure you are on top of things on that.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Ah, I was going to ask you about this. I

totally forgot.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: How strong are you?]

‘What?’

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: When I leave the Tutorial, there will be many that will ask me about you. Whenever they do, I need to give a rough answer at least. So, how strong are you now?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I am not sure. What should I use as the frame of reference to compare my strength?]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: How about G-rank monsters? Although none of us have seen it in real life.]

In the outside world, the monsters were rated based on their strength and threat level. Initially, the ranks were made of A to F. One day, suddenly, the S rank was also introduced. After a while, even G-rank was added.

I wondered what they would call it if a new monster beyond the G-rank monsters showed up.

Anyway, the G-rank monsters were beyond just being a dangerous organism. They were national level threats.

I heard that there were just four of them on Earth.

Also, all four of them, after claiming their territories, stayed inside the area and never left. So, the humans choose to give up the areas instead of trying to reclaim them.

However, a G-rank monster named Oclrera claimed its territory near Manhattan, New York.

U.S. could not give up that area. They brought in Earth's greatest Awakened warriors and poured in all of their air power to destroy Oclrera.

In that battle, about half of S and A-rank Awakened warriors, the greatest warriors in existence on Earth, were killed.

I didn't know exactly what kind of power that Oclrera had.

As Kim Min-huk said, we never saw it in person. We only heard about G-rank monsters from newbies who ended up in Tutorial.

‘If I analyze it based on what the newbies said and the information on the normal news...

No, there is no need ‘

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I'm probably super strong even if you compared to those bastards. Well...]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Thank you for the thoughtless answer that I think I've heard before.]

As we talked like that, we started to talk about old days.

From how we met, during the times of hardship, when things were going well...

The memories of them were like short stories.

It was because I was always alone in Hell Difficulty.

I got to meet Kim Min-huk in person only for a few times besides the day of the great harmony.

Besides that, all I remembered was communicating with him through the Community.

Still, that was not all there was to my friendship with Kim Min-huk.

He was one of my very few friends. He was my family.

'Not being able to meet him in person is going to be the same even when he leaves the Tutorial.'

To split the hair here, it was just the conversation through the

Community that I was going to lose.

However, losing that felt like a good bye.

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: I'll be going first. I'll see you outside.]

‘... It's as it should be.’

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: All right. Say hello to others who are outside.]

‘That's right. I should also get out. I should.

It is obvious.’

I wonder what was troubling me back then.

Among the papers in disarray laying on the table, I found the letter I was going to send to Lee Youn-hye.

The letter was tightly packed with written words. The very last row was empty.

In that only remaining space, I filled it with a sentence.

Please tell Kiri Kiri about Zara.

Chapter 51 - Tutorial 6th Floor (2)

[Round Four, Day 2, 07:10]

Two days passed since Round Four started.

I wanted to challenge the Sixth Floor again as soon as the round started.

Actually, I wanted to try it again as soon as I was forcibly teleported to the waiting room after failing the floor.

I knew I only stood very little chance of clearing the floor. However, I still wanted to challenge it again.

This was my first defeat.

I struggled and then some since the First Floor. I overcame many dangers that almost cost my life. Despite all that, I had never felt a sense of defeat like this.

I was always growing stronger.

By repeating the challenge several times, I quickly overcame the difficulty of the trials.

However, it was a little different this time.

I felt doubt. I wondered if I could actually do it. I felt like th wall in front of me.

When I decided to quit my professional gamer career, I did it after suffering a huge defeat from a nameless newbie player. It was the same hopelessness like I felt before.

My response time was getting slower. I had deep injuries on my back, shoulder and wrists. I suffered from pain in those locations. My eyes got tired easily, my brain was not able to think of creative ideas quickly as I used to either.

I longed for my abilities from my prime. However, I became certain that I was never going to be able to get my abilities back. When I was certain of it, that was when I decided to retire.

From that perspective, the Tutorial was a blessing.

As soon as I entered the First Floor's waiting room, my bent back, arthritis-ridden wrist, and dull response speed were all recovered back to how I was in my prime.

I was literally becoming a super human now. I was overwhelmingly superior to what I was in my prime.

‘If I could leave Tutorial right now and go back to the real world to return to professional gaming, I’m certain I can beat anyone and

achieve flawless victory every time.

Of course, there is no way I'll be able to leave this place right this instant.'

Inside the Tutorial's Sixth Floor, I felt the sense of hopelessness that I felt back then.

One thing was different. Inside the Tutorial, I had plenty of chances to grow.

There was also the fact that aging stopped.

'I can overcome even the hopelessness I'm feeling right now.'

Having thought that, I felt an itch in my heart.

'I want to go smash those skeleton soldiers' heads right now.

I think I can do better now.'

Like that, eager to rush out there and fight again, I had to wait for three days at the waiting room.

A lot had happened while I waited like that.

More newbies entered the Tutorial.

Numerous challengers inside the Tutorial were thirsty for information about what was happening in the outside world. To them, the news about the reality outside was like a sweet rain after a draught.

The situation in Korea was actually better than I thought.

Chuung-chung area was destroyed. However, all other areas were safe.

The human forces set up perimeters to the north and south of the Chuung-chung area to guard against the monsters from spreading to the rest of the country.

The newbies said the situation in Korea was on the pretty good side.

Actually, it was not like the people in Korea were happy about what was happening.

However, the people could say that the situation in Korea, where several thousands of people were dying from the attack, was better than other countries because the situation in other countries were significantly worse.

Besides what was happening in the outside world, there were many things that happened inside the Tutorial.

As soon as the Round Four started, Park Jung-ah started a war against all members of the Representative Federation.

Her reason was that the Federation showed signs that they were going to make moves again.

Regardless of what she claimed as the reason for the war, I wondered if it was even possible for those members of the Federation, who suffered so horribly during the day of the great harmony, to even fathom scheming anything.

Moreover, she declared the war when many of the members of the Federation were scattered around the First Floor's waiting room.

The Federation's forces were at a disadvantage in every possible way.

However, Park Jung-ah concluded that the Representative Federation was showing signs of rebellion.

Like that, she started a war.

After that, the war ended as soon as it begun.

Only thing left to do in the aftermath was the purge.

From what was announced, eight additional members of the

Federation were executed.

They were all of the members of the Federation who chose to remain in the First Floor.

Of them all, the story was that Park Jung-Ah personally blew up the head of one with the handgun.

There was a heated debate inside the Order of the Vigilance about if they should keep Park Jung-ah in charge or not.

Honestly, I was not sure.

She could become a murderous devil who was only interested in taking cruel revenge against the people she resented.

She could also become a judge who insists severe punishment to the evil doers.

She could be both. She could be neither.

This matter was already out of my hands. So, I decided not to trouble my mind with this matter anymore as long as she does not seriously cross the line.

‘If the problem with the Order of Vigilance becomes serious, then another day of great harmony will happen. Thinking about all the information gathered so far by the rankers, I am certain about

this.'

The question was if the problem about Park Jung-ah required an immediate response. I decided to use the occurrence of the day of the great harmony as the basis for answering this question.

If the day of the great harmony happened because of her, then I was going to do the same thing I have done before.

I was going to do it even if she was a victim in the past and I could understand why she did.

For a few days, I agonized about it like that.

While I was at it, Kim Min-huk was also pretty busy.

He made Tutorial guide and posted it on the Community for the newbies.

Also, using the auction site, he created gifting and trading system.

The items on the auction that had 7 or 77 points as the price meant they were for a specific person, so others were advised not to bid on them.

It was a simple rule, but it was a great rule.

With this simple rule, physical trade among the people became active through the Community.

Until now, the auction site was used by the rankers to get rid of items they didn't need anymore.

Needless to say, but there were not much trading activities back then.

The challengers had not gathered enough points back then, so the auction prices were lower than the prices on the stores.

Through blood and death, Park Jung-ah petrified the atmosphere inside the Tutorial to install fear among the people from committing crimes.

Meanwhile, Kim Min-huk was creating an environment for people to communicate more easily.

He told me that he wanted to create a society inside the Tutorial.

Tutorial was a strange place, and it was definitely not an ideal place for creating a society. However, he said he wanted to make this place habitable for people.

Kim Min-huk was pessimistic about clearing the 100th Floor.

Instead of thinking about reaching the floor in the distant future

where only few would ever get to, he said that focusing on creating an environment for people to reside in the lower floors was more important.

He was right.

I was not in complete agreement with his idea, but number of people who fell behind was going to continue to grow.

There were plenty of such people in First and Second Floors in all difficulties.

For the sake of many weak people, perhaps Kim Min-huk's way was the best way. That's what I thought.

Also, a stable environment created from his efforts could be useful in clearing the Tutorial.

It was not like I was just playing around in the past few days.

I had things for me to do.

They were about the newbies who entered the Hell Difficulty at the Round Four.

They were two men named Lee Gyoung-whan and Kim Jong-in.

I asked what they were thinking when they choose Hell Difficulty. One said he was drunk. The other said he thought he was seeing things so he waved his hand in the air to check and accidentally pressed it.

They really had rotten lucks. They fell to the Hell Difficulty from moments of carelessness. I really felt for them.

Now that I think about it, the comrades I met during the Round One were really unique.

They all chose Hell Difficulty willingly.

Although I was the only one who survived.

For these unfortunate newbies, I explained about the Hell Difficulty while being as polite as possible.

During the Round Two, I simply told the newbies about the trap's patterns and didn't explain anything else. This time, I did a lot more. I explained how to dodge the traps and made something similar to a development guide.

Even with all those, I was not certain if the new challengers would survive. So, I asked them to try out the first trap and contact me after returning to the waiting room.

After that...

Board (2/2)

[Kim Jong-in, First Floor: Big Bro, I can't do it. How am I supposed to get past this? From the first arrow to the very last one, I couldn't hear any of them. I was not even aware that arrows were coming at me. I was just walking, twisted my ankle, and fell on the spot. I barely managed to live because of that. How am I supposed to dodge and block these by looking at them?]

One of them died, and the other lost the mental strength to continue.

Unfortunately, it went as I thought.

Despite the hard work I put in during past three days, no, actually four days, they didn't lead to any good results.

'How could I save the unfortunate people who fell to the Hell Difficulty...

Ugh...'

[Lee Ho-jae, Sixth Floor: Just wait at the waiting room. When the waiting period ends, wait in front of the portal. During the next round, I'll send you food through the auction site. Try to hold out with meat jerkies until then.]

I had no choice but to make him give up on challenging the floor.

‘Is this the right answer?’

Humans were feeble minded creatures.

I was asking him to hold out for 30 days in front of the portal while eating just meat jerkies and water.

After that, he had to stay at the waiting room for three to four days. After that, he had to repeat the process in front of the portal for another 30 days.

‘He might have to do this for the rest of his life.

Could he hold out without losing his mind?

He cannot.

Actually, there are others in Easy and Normal Difficulties who are holding out like that. They are mentally suffering a lot.

Kim Min-huk is trying to support these people and move them up to the higher floors. At the same time, he is trying to create a society for these people who are stuck.

On the other hand, in the Hell Difficulty... I am not sure.

I don't know.'

I realized that there was nothing else I could do for the newbies.

In the end, I started to walk my own path again.

*

I baked a bread on the magic bonfire that was making cracking sound as the fire burned. I decided to organize my thoughts as I ate the bread.

During the past few days, I thought hard about what to do with Park Jung-ah and the Order of Vigilance. I also worked hard to help newbies. While I was doing all that, I never stopped thinking about the Sixth Floor either.

‘Just how am I supposed to clear this one?’

[Goblin Graktus' Birth Stone]

Description: Instructor Graktus is the meanest of all red eyed goblins. When he was born, the tribe's Sharman gifted this Birth Stone.

[Goblin Goros' Birth Stone]

Description: Instructor Goros is the most intolerant of all red eyed goblins. When he was born, the tribe's Sharman gifted this Birth Stone.

[Lizardman Idaltaru's Spirit Stone]

Description: Of all lizardmen living in the Iden swamp, she is the strongest and most unlucky warrior. This is her spirit stone.

[Dead Summon (Lv.???)]

Description: This is a power of a nameless god. This god refused to reveal the name to the challengers.

Using an item that contains a part of the dead's soul as the medium, you can summon the dead for a fixed duration.

This power has a limit imposed by the god.

Number of times it can be done (5/5)

If I used the dead summoning, I could have three comrades.

I was not certain if they would be my comrades, but I thought it might be possible if I used the knowledge before the time of babel and convinced them.

‘What if they joined me as comrades?’

Myself, Graktus, and Goros, and Idaltaru...

I could make three teams like that. We could take turns and stop the skull soldiers.

We could preserve our endurance that way. Also, a member in standby could jump in to help when the active team is in danger.

When the skeleton commander shows up, the team in standby could go and assassinate the commander and run back.

If it was just myself, I was not going to be able to stop the skeleton soldiers running toward the stone door while I tried to pick off the skeleton commander.

Otherwise, we could form a scrum and try to break through the skeleton soldiers.

The Sixth Floor’s corridor was narrow, so it was wide enough for

only four to five large adults to stand in a row. So, forming a scrum and trying to break through was a potentially viable strategy.

It was obvious that the dead summoning skill could be very useful in clearing the Sixth Floor.

I could believe it if the gods claimed they gifted me with this skill to help me clear the Sixth Floor.

However, it bothered me to know that the description also said there is a time limit on the summoned beings.

I factored in the idea that the summoned beings will disappear after a fixed duration passed.

The dead summoning skill was limited to just five tries.

Also, there was going to be more floors from now that require party play like now.

In that case, even if I used the dead summoning to break through this floor, one day, I was going to run into another wall.

The situation was that I didn't have any challenger who could cooperate with me. Getting past the Sixth Floor by bringing in temporary mercenaries was not the answer.

I thought about the long term. The right answer was developing

myself so I could handle five people's worth of fighting.

The conclusion that I arrived after agonizing about this over and over was simple.

‘I need to go back to the beginning.

For now, let's just make sure I don't die.

With near-death as the boundary line, I need to fight on hard and then some more.

I must not give up. I need to keep on colliding against them and grow from it.’

Because of how the Tutorial's system worked, my level was bound to go up continuously from repeating the challenges, and my skills were also going to grow further.

I could even obtain new skills.

In the outside world, putting oneself through hardships and working hard only lead to wounds and injuries to the body. However, it was different inside the Tutorial.

As long as the waiting rooms existed, exhaustion and pain do not accumulate inside the body.

I just needed to focus on developments.

For now, I should postpone clearing the floor.

I shouldn't be impatient.

If I use a trick to clear the floor while postponing the development, I will just get stuck on the next floor.

It would be better to not even consider that as an option.

Continuing to put in efforts and developing further is the shortest path for clearing the Tutorial.

Instead of foolish thoughts, I just need to focus on developing myself.

If I fail at clearing the trial, I'll just get sent back to the waiting room.

I just need to challenge again if that happens.

I just need to make sure I don't die.

Until I become strong enough...

Until I can handle the hordes of skeleton soldiers...

Instead of being satisfied with not being pushed back, I need to become stronger until I can push them back and march forward myself. Until then...

The conditions for the growth were perfect inside the Tutorial. Along with increase in my masteries, my level and skills increased. The waiting room provided complete recovery.

‘As long as my determination remains solid, I can overcome anything no matter how tall the wall is. Someday...’

This was the conclusion I reached.

Long story short, I meant that I was going to work my ass off until it worked out.

It was as expected of the Hell Difficulty.

It was not going to let me become complacent.

This Tutorial world was similar to RPG games.

Also, one of the main thing in RPG games was level grinding.

Nothing was impossible with level grinding.

‘Starting with today, I’m just going to shut up and hunt. I’ll show them the resolve of a Korean gamer.’

As the first goal, I chose level 20.

*

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor’s trial.]

[Round Four is ending.]

Chapter 52 - Tutorial 6th Floor (Sidestory)

[Lee Ho-jae, Third Floor: ... I wonder why there is no response. Hey you bastards. You are all going to die at this rate, don't you get it?]

‘I bet they died like that.

Why won't they listen?

Honestly, I knew those guys were going to die.’

I brought out a chocolate bar from the inventory. I held it in my mouth and read the Community.

This posting was from eight years ago.

‘I feel like an archeologist who is excavating ancient ruins.’

I started reading the Community just to pass the time.

The life in the waiting room at Hell Difficulty was too boring because I was always alone.

I felt I would rather be out in the stage. I wished the waiting would come to end sooner.

I learned I should work on passive skills or other skills. However, honestly, I didn't want to do it.

Moreover, skill levels simply refused to rise.

It rose even slower in the waiting room.

Honestly, I didn't want to work on passive skills grinding even if they increased faster than other skills.

I would have done it reluctantly if I was supposed to do it no matter what.

However, now that I gave up on increasing skill levels, I suddenly had nothing to do.

I realized why mister didn't force me to do skill grinding.

He probably knew that there was nothing to do in the waiting room besides skill grinding.

I read all postings and comments on the Community.

I had read all new posts as they came up, so there was nothing left to do.

In the end, unable to beat the boredom, I looked for old posts.

I managed to get a rough idea about the history of the Korean server just from checking out old posts in the Community board.

Before I entered the Tutorial, I watched a documentary about it, so I had a rough idea about what the Tutorial was about. However, reading the past conversations by the actual past participants of the Tutorial was fun in a different way.

Like that, I found texts from the past and slowly worked my way back. Before long, I was able to find writings from the days when the Tutorial was first created.

As I thought, mister was active since the start of the Tutorial.

At first, people treated him as a liar. However, he soon became the strongest among the rankers, the people who represented the Tutorial.

Mister's work continued even after that. Just reading about it was incredibly interesting.

Actually, I knew about him even before I entered the Tutorial.

It was not surprising because he was very famous.

He was the challenger at the highest floor in the Hell Difficulty. He was the only survivor in the Hell Difficulty in Korea.

As soon as his existence was made known, the media never stopped yapping about him.

The media found his childhood friends and interviewed them. The media also analyzed his school records.

The media pasted his professional gamer experiences on the front and again yapped away that the knowledge on the games he played might help clearing the Hell Difficulty.

As an actual challenger of the Hell Difficulty, I could say that they were not helping at all.

Documentary about him poured out in bucket loads. Also, there were all sorts of petty gossips about his personal life from the past.

However, I actually got to know about him before all those.

One time, my little sibling was watching television. I glanced at it, and I noticed a handsome face.

I asked who that was. My big brother said he was a professional gamer.

Back then, I thought he was pretty good looking for a professional gamer. I wondered why he was doing professional gaming instead of being an actor. I glanced over the face as I

thought those.

He was a man I noticed a few times on the television like that. Now, that man was like my Daddy Long Legs. It felt strange just thinking about it.

He really was like Daddy Long Legs.

When I entered the Hell Difficulty by a mistake and was confused and scared, he gave me hope and faith.

The hope I had back then turned mostly into pain and screams now.

However, I was still carrying the hope for survival.

He became my support. He became my sponsor.

Without him, let alone getting all the way to this floor, I would have had difficulty just surviving in the First Floor.

My life in the Tutorial was harsh and painful. I was suffering a lot. Like in here continued like that. However, I was able to endure my life in here thanks to him.

I suddenly thought perhaps I want to be a similar existence to him.

He was my Daddy Long Leg. In that case, perhaps I was a prince riding on a white horse?

A prince who is going on a thousand mile journey through hardship and danger to save a princess trapped in a witch's castle...

I thought that I switched the positions somehow.

Still, that made me laugh in some way..

My eyes narrowed from smiling. A smile formed on my lips as well.

Nobody was watching, but I was embarrassed.

‘What am I thinking?

Well, actually...

Why not?

“Puhup. I think I must have gone insane. Aaaaaak.”

I screamed by myself and rolled around on the bed.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Are you all ready?]

I felt so light. I was flying. However, a heavy weight came crashing down on me.

[Lee Yeon-hye, Sixth Floor: Yes. What is it?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Big Bro told me to check up on you. He went up to the 61st Floor.]

‘Now she called him Big Bro. Huh!

How ridiculous.’

I looked all of the chats and posts in the Community from the start of the very first round but I have never saw any record of her ever calling him by that.

Not even once.

Usually, they called each other as commander, captain, or etc. Later, they addressed each other casually.

Sometimes, they went beyond and even cursed at each other.

‘So why is she doing that now?’

I could sense the weariness clearly.

At first, I wondered why she was so rude to me. I wondered if she was always like that to everyone.

However, I knew the reason very well.

Besides this, there was one other thing that felt off.

[Lee Yeon-hye, Sixth Floor: Why did he go to the 61st Floor?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: He went there to earn points. He used quite a bit this time, so...]

‘It looks like he is not looking for a way to clear the floor. I guess I don’t need to talk to her for long then.

I just don’t like every word coming from her.’

I haphazardly responded to her and ended the conversation.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Did you memorize what you need to tell the manager?]

‘Hey, seriously...’

[Lee Yeon-hye, Sixth Floor: Yes.]

‘I don’t want to talk to you any longer.

Now you are treating me like a kid.

What. Are you trying to tell me that a kid should not butt in? Is it something like that?’

[Round 95 is starting.]

[Lee Yeon-hye, Sixth Floor: Well then, I’ll be heading to the stage now.]

I gave a simple good bye and then stepped on to the portal.

Another message came from her. However, I ignored it and turned off the messenger.

It was the time for me to get rid of unnecessary thoughts and focus on clearing the stage.

[Welcome to the Sixth Floor’s stage.]

As soon as I entered the bonfire room, I opened the inventory and checked the items to use.

After that, I checked my skill list.

As the last thing, I verified the information about the stage and the strategy for clearing it.

Mister never told me every fine details about each trials. He didn't this time as well.

Other than the information about growth, skill utilization and development, he was very stingy about information on the trials.

He only told me about the kind that would definitely get me killed if I walked past it without knowing about it.

For the First and the Second Floors, he told me everything in fine detail, all patterns and strategies. However, he said it was time for me to learn to gather information myself and utilize them on my own.

He was right.

Honestly, I wish he just told me everything. Still...

The core of the Sixth Stage's trial was the 16 priests.

They pumped out skeleton soldiers as if they were making canned foods from a factory.

All skeleton soldiers appearing on the stage were going to be generated by the priests. I had to do something before they make too many of the skeleton soldiers for me to handle.

The description said I could just hold out until the holy knights came. However, that was a trap.

If I just held out and waited, I could never be able to handle the ever growing number of skeleton soldiers, which was growing like crazy.

I ran a simulation of my plan in my brain.

‘All right. Let’s try it.’

[Would you like to challenge the trial?]

Through the portal next to the bonfire, I teleported to the Stage.

[The Sixth Floor’s trial is starting.]

Explanation: It already has been over 50 years since the cursed priests of the Bahare Sect had been pursued by the Pantheon. As you already know, The Bahare Sect is an evil

organization that seeks to reap more death by reviving the dead people and turning their souls into evil spirits.

Including Khezas, their leader, there are 16 priests. They managed to lose the Pantheon's pursuit and successfully arrive at the heart of the white mountain range.

The place is also called the land of the god, a place where a god resided in the past.

The Bahare Sect priests are trying to cover the world in nightmare using the remains of holy artifacts.

Brave warriors, stop them until the holy knights of the Pantheon arrives. You are our only hope.

[Condition of success.]

1. Stop the death army from entering the white mountain range until the holy knights arrive.
2. Destroy the death army and 16 priests.

I had seen the message many times already. I just turned it off and opened the inventory.

The most critical thing in this battle was the speed.

I brought out high level magic stone and concentrated mana potion.

I put some of the concentrated mana potion on my hand and drew a magic circle with my hand on the floor.

I placed the magic stone on the center of the magic circle and recited the activation word.

“Panto.”

As soon as those words left my mouth, I directed my gaze away from the magic circle that was generating steady light. I charged forward.

Before long, the acceleration from the wind spirit’s blessing was activated.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

‘I guess this place will do.’

While I was running, I opened the inventory and brought out an alarm trap. I tossed it to the ground.

I really started to accelerate.

“Sylphleah.”

This spirit magic had the low altitude flight ability. A shouted out the activation word, and my body floated up in the air.

I still had far to go.

Instead of losing the stamina from running, it was going to be more comfortable to use a bit of mana to get there.

Thanks to the magic's effects, I was going to be able to maintain current speed. Also, the corridor was going to be a straight path for a while, so I had no need to worry about colliding with anything.

Even while I was carrying myself through the flight magic, occasionally, I brought out magic traps from the inventory and tossed them on the corridor.

Like that, I flew through the corridor for a while, and the straight path came to an end.

There were two pathways, left and right.

I canceled the flight magic. This time, I used the detection magic.

‘Good, the skeleton soldiers are not nearby yet.’

I drew a magic circle in middle of the fork.

It was an explosive magic circle.

It was like an explosive mine.

‘Ordinary skeleton soldiers on the front probably won’t notice this explosive magic circle. They will just step on it and activate it.’

Considering the huge number of skeleton soldiers, this was not going to do much damage to the overall force. However, I was going to be able to tell their location based on the explosion sound.

I completed the magic circle and entered the left pathway.

There were going to be 13 more forks ahead. I learned the pathways prior to this.

Left, left, left, right, left, right, left, left, left, right, left, right, right, right.

I went through a lot just to figure that out.

I walked quietly.

From the distance, I could hear the steps of the skeleton soldiers.

To confirm it again, I used the detection skill. As I thought, I could detect many skeleton soldiers.

“Amataru Deta Spilkeon.”

I recited the spell, and the wind curtain spirit appeared.

It was a useful spirit that possessed both flight and invisibility abilities.

It looked like a curtain flapping in the air.

It was said that the spirit had the head somewhere in the body. However, no matter how I looked at it, I could not see anything that resembled a head.

“Let’s stick to the ceiling and move.”

The wind spirit wrapped my body and rose up to the ceiling.

The corridor’s ceiling was very low. If I was to avoid colliding with the skeleton soldiers, I had to stick close to the ceiling and fly through.

I didn't have to worry about being found out.

Considering the wind curtain spirit's invisibility effect and my stealth skill's level, there was no way I was going to be detected by the skeleton soldiers.

'The skeleton commanders probably will look up the ceiling once in a while, but that would be it.

The seven death knights are the only ones that might be able to detect me. Also, as long as I follow the path I have, I won't run into the death knights."

*

Like that, sticking close to the ceiling, I flew for a while. I was able to reach a gigantic cave.

In the cave, there were the 16 priests. They were making skeleton soldiers by several dozens at a time.

I hid behind a pillar and unsummoned the wind curtain spirit.

It would have been bad if it got hit blind by a magic and destroyed.

'I don't have very long for attacking those priests. They will stop the summoning and attack me as soon as they notice me. Even if I

manage to stop their attacks, the death knights will be summoned to this place immediately afterwards. I cannot handle them all at once.'

I had the edge on the pre-emptive strike. With that in mind, I had about six seconds. That was all.

'I shouldn't attack Khezas, their leader. That one turns into a bizarre looking squid when attacked. The magic attacks it shoots out in that form is incredibly deadly. Also, the production rate of the skeleton soldiers will increase significantly.

I need to keep it from using its power. Since the enemies' boss is saving its strength at the moment, I should be courteous and let it be.'

I quietly picked up the bow I had on my back. I placed an arrow on it and drew the string.

"Light."

The arrow was launched as I said the activation word. The arrow struck right on a priest's neck and exploded immediately.

For now, one of them died at an instant.

The explosion caused a powerful flash of light.

‘I am not sure about skeleton soldiers that do not have eyes. However, the priests appear to be human. They probably have no choice but to close their eyes for a moment.’

It would have been nice if they got blinded temporarily. However, these guys were not that shabby.

While the priests were stunned from the flash, I shot another arrow and killed another priest.

[Kuuuuuuuu! Come! Knights of death!]

‘They are summoning the death knights sooner than I expected.’

I dodged the fire magic attack that was coming at me while I placed another arrow on the bow.

[Maiden who are blessed by the spirits! Maiden who had been swindled by the false gods! You shall experience death!]

I shot the arrow as I activated the battle focus skill.

The world was slowing down. I calmly organized the situation.

The arrow was shot toward the third priest. Judging from the path, it was going to hit right on.

I killed total of three priests.

It was not bad.

As for my side...

I saw two fire magic attacks coming at me.

There was a death knight that came close to where I was.

The priests were reciting curse spells.

Considering their experience, I figured their spells were almost complete.

‘This is the limit.’

“Phanto Raka!”

Immediately after I yelled out the activation words, I was standing at the entrance of the Sixth Floor’s Stage. To be precise, I was standing on top of the magic circle I drew there.

This time, I had some results.

I killed three priests. The ten other priests were all busy with casting attack and curse spells so they stopped the summoning

magic.

It was going to take quite some time before they could restart the summoning magic for the skeleton soldiers.

“Huuuuuaaaa.”

I sounded like wind was coming out of me. I plummeted to the ground.

I used too many magic spells in a too short of a time frame.

Not to mention they were all pretty high level magic spells.

I was at my limits on mana, mental strength, and stamina. I was barely holding on.

There was only one course of action, to use potions to replenish my mana and stamina.

I brought out mana potion as I listened to the explosion sound of the explosive trap echoing from a far distance.

Chapter 53 - Tutorial 6th Floor (3)

[Round Five, Day 8, 09:30]

[Welcome to the Sixth Floor's Stage.]

[The Sixth Floor's trial is starting.]

I had no need for preparations or making plans.

As soon as I woke up I stretched and checked the Community then went straight to the Stage.

With light steps, I stretched some more as I walked.

I had to walk like this for two more hours before running into the skeleton soldiers.

‘Um... I’m throwing away a lot of time here. Should I work on passive skills?

No, I won’t exactly have much time to recover before the battle.

It’s not like I can keep on using potions.

Um...

Should I get there while exercising a little?

I could do a burpee exercise each time I take three steps. I can exercise like that until I am about 30 minutes away from the skeleton soldiers.

I can calm my breathing for the battle and rest then.

That does not sound like a bad idea.

Let's do it.'

Having repeated the burpee exercise for several tens of minutes, my breathing became fast and my leg muscles were getting stiff.

"Wow..."

All of my physical abilities, including raw muscle strength and endurance, far exceeded that of humans.

Still, a simple exercise like this was having such an impact on me. I never thought it was possible.

'Looks like I had been slacking off on basic exercises too much.

The growth on passive skills are slowing down to a crawl nowadays. I think it will be more effective to do this kind of physical exercises in my spare time from now on.'

I took a moment to catch my breath and calm down. While I was at it, the sounds of skeleton soldiers' steps were starting to be heard.

'Now, let's start again today.'

[Level Up.]

[Strength went up by 1. Stamina went up by 3. Mana went up by 1. Defensive Skill went up by 1. Hand-to-Hand Combat Skill went up by 1.]

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor's trial.]

*

One time, the number one gamer of a popular RPG game was asked a question. The question was,

"You must be hunting whole day. Are you not bored of it?"

The response was,

“Are you not bored of living?

Life is repetition of daily routines, and I get to repeat what I like to do every day.

I don't get bored of it.”

It was a great answer.

It was lacking a little in the logic department, but it was very convincing for a gamer. It was enough for gamers to agree immediately.

It was the story that the coach for a professional game team told to the players who complained that they were sick of the game.

I did not know if someone actually said something like that. I did not know if he meant it either.

I was also not interested enough to know.

Actually, I became a professional gamer because I liked winning. It was not because I liked playing video games.

If it was just the game that I liked, I would have been satisfied with being an ordinary gamer.

By being an ordinary gamer, I could play all sorts of games as I want whenever I wanted. That was way better than being a professional gamer.

Because my goal in professional gaming was not about enjoying the game itself, I was not particularly bothered by repetitions in gaming.

‘However, I do want to go run to that top RPG player and ask.

I want to ask if he doesn’t get sick of it.

I want to ask what I could do to not get sick of it.

I want to beg him to tell me.

I am getting sick of this.

Smashing skeleton soldiers’ skulls...

Enduring noise pollution from their giiiaaaaak yelling...

Repeating same motions with sword and shield over and over...

Feeling pain from being cut by rusty blades here and there on my body...

Damn it all. Even if I am getting sick of them all...

I have to do this. It is my work.'

I thought that and repeatedly reminded myself.

'It probably will come to an end soon.'

There was one thing great about all this.

I became completely used to the sword swing motion.

I had been swinging it in a similar motion through a similar trajectory through countless familiar situations that repeated over and over. It resulted in me developing a way of sword technique that I usually used in most situations.

Thanks to it, my swordsmanship skill's level went up quite a bit.

As I got used to swinging the sword, moving the shield also became a lot more natural.

[You acquired Basic Swordsmanship Lv.10.]

[You acquired Basic Shield Technique Lv.7.]

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor's trial.]

*

[You acquired Battle Focus Lv. 13.]

With the Battle Focus level increased, the cognitive processing ability during the accelerated state improved.

When I first acquired it, the effect only allowed me to see things in slow motion.

Now, I could almost see the world as if the world was standing still.

Of course, that kind of heightened focus could be maintained only for a moment. Still, I thought I was still developing further and there was a lot more room for growth.

[You acquired Will Lv.7.]

It seemed that using the Battle Focus often lead to the Will to also increase.

[You acquired Basic Swordsmanship Lv. 11.]

[You acquired Basic Shield Technique Lv.10.]

Lately, the shield technique was catching up to the swordsmanship.

‘Is it because I had been ending up doing a lot more shielding because I was fighting many enemies at once?’

[You acquired Iron Wall Lv.1.]

[Hardened Skin Lv.4 will be combined with Iron Wall Lv.1.]

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor’s trial.]

“Uuuuaaaaaa!”

[You acquired Battle Cry Lv.2.]

The Battle Cry was a kind of boost skill.

In video games, barbarians or tanker warriors had this skill.

The description said the combat abilities will increase by a small margin. However, I was not sure just how much it was.

I was so annoyed by the skeleton soldiers yelling giaaaaak giaaak at me, so I had been yelling back at them. I ended up acquiring the skill from doing that.

Thanks to that, I often returned to the waiting room with worn out voice.

The waiting room gave me a complete recovery as usual, including my worn out vocal cords.

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor’s trial.]

*

[You shall experience death! I, the death knight Asthe shall gift you the great slumber!]

A mid-level boss showed up.

For a moment, I was excited because I mistook that monster as the final boss.

‘You bastard. Go rot in hell...

Well, you are already about half rotten, but...’

“You bastard! You made me excited for nothing. You are dead!”

Now that I think about it, even I think my line sounds like I had a loose screw somewhere in my head. Along with that shouting, I charged toward the death knight.

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor’s trial.]

*

‘Damn it all. I was stopped again from progressing further.’

The forks were the problem.

After the straight pathway on the corridor ended, forks with two pathways started to appear one after another.

Even if I chose one and broke through the army along that path, the skeleton soldiers that got through the other path reached and opened the stone door.

‘What should I do...’

The first option was giving up on breaking through the skeleton army and blocking the straight path until the holy knights arrived.

‘That is unrealistic.

The holy knights are coming way too late.’

One time, the holy knights didn’t show even after 13 days since the trial started.

It was possible they were not going to arrive until the very last moment, just before the end of the 30th day.

When I held out for 13 days, I barely managed by really forcing myself to do so.

During that time, I ended up using all of my potions, so I could never do that again.

It was not that I was lacking strength to fight. It was a matter of endurance limit. It was seriously lacking.

The second option was to go through the pathways before the skeleton soldiers get to the stone door and clear the stage.

It seemed like the second option was even more unrealistic. However, the idea sounded more appealing.

Both options required me to become stronger.

‘I should go back to focusing on becoming stronger.’

[You acquired Bleeding Resistance Lv.8.]

[You acquired Piercing Resistance Lv.4.]

[You acquired Paralysis Resistance Lv.9.]

Meanwhile, my passive skills improved a lot.

I had been getting cut by rusty weapons more frequently. With that, the Paralysis Resistance went up the most.

The Pain Resistance didn't increase.

It seemed like simple flesh wounds were not going to make it develop further.

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor's trial.]

*

[Human who are blessed by false gods! You shall experience death!]

[Level Up.]

[Strength went up by 1. Agility went up by 1. Basic Swordsmanship Skill went up by 1.]

[You obtained Basic Swordsmanship Lv.15.]

[Basic Swordsmanship Lv.15 was changed to Mid-level

Swordsmanship Lv.1]

[You obtained Mana Circuit Lv.1.]

With the Mana Circuit, it became possible for me to utilize the mana hidden inside my body.

I was still clumsy at using it, but I had been making the mana to circulate through my body whenever I had the time.

The circulation worked only through the same paths.

I had to work hard to memorize these paths and understand them.

[You obtained Mana Circuit Lv. 4.]

With that, it became possible for me to put on a thin layer of mana on my hand.

Also, even without wrapping my body's surface with mana, I could boost my physical abilities just from having the mana circulate through my body.

I thought it might be also possible to use explosive strength by

sending mana to the muscles at the moment of need.

I had to practice some more.

[You obtained Mana Circuit Lv. 7.]

[You obtained Mid-level Swordsmanship Lv.2.]

It's a light saber!

I'm [Jo-seon](#)'s first sword master!

[TL: Jo-seon is the name of the Korean kingdom before the country became a democratic nation.]

It became possible for me to surround my sword with mana.

As I got used to utilizing mana, the amount of mana I had started to be relatively insufficient.

I wondered if there was anything I could do.

*

[Servant of false gods! Witness the power of true greatness! The greatest and absolute power, the only one in existence in this

world, shall become the savior to this corrupt world!]

[Human, you are brave but foolish! You have chosen the wrong path!]

[I, Khezas shall lead you to death!]

[You obtained Meditation Lv.1.]

Unfortunately, Meditation had nothing to do with increasing the mana capacity.

As the word said, it was simply for meditation.

It didn't look like it could be of any use, but it turned out it was very useful in focusing my mind through the Magic Circuit.

I started to meditate whenever I had the time.

With the Meditation skill obtained, I got to have chance to look back at all the things that happened lately.

Many things had happened since I ended up inside the Tutorial, and...

... Having thought about it, I realized that nothing good ever happened, not even one.

As I thought more and more through meditation, my chest felt frustrated and the thoughts seriously agitated my mood.

However, I couldn't stop thinking about the past.

As if I was possessed by something, I continued to think about negative thoughts.

They spoiled my mood, and the negative mood resulted in loss of will to go on.

[You acquired Mental Corruption Resistance Lv.2.]

...

I thought it was subjecting me to mental stress, but I didn't know it was to the point of mental corruption.

Actually, I noticed signs that indicated I was losing my mind a little.

Something like this happened in the past.

It was when I was grinding away at the Second Floor... I think.

Back then, I was worried and scared, thinking I might end up with a mental illness.

Claiming it as a hobby, I picked up knitting and made gloves and scarfs.

Still, back then, I had the confidence to clear the floor anytime I wanted. I was grinding just for the sake of growth.

Compared to that... right now...

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor’s trial.]

*

“Uooooooooaaaaaa!”

[You obtained Soul Cry Lv.1.]

[Battle Cry Lv.3 will be combined with Soul Cry Lv.1.]

I had been screaming by putting in mana while using the Battle Cry. I got a new skill from doing that.

When it came to boosting my combat abilities, the skill was the same as the Battle Cry. However, there was one extra feature to the new skill.

[Extra feature: The enemies below your level will not be able to ignore you and run away or avoid you.]

An area effective provocation skill was created.

With this skill, I was going to be able to easily tie down the skeleton soldiers who got past me and ran toward the stone door.

Not just the swordsmanship, but the shield technique and hand-to-hand combat technique also became mid-levels.

[Human, you possess astonishing power! This is the true form of myself, the Khezas!]

[You acquired Curse Resistance Lv.6.]

[You acquired Grand Magic Resistance Lv.2.]

I really almost died.

I had been exposed to danger for so long all this time that my sense of alertness became faint.

My Curse Resistance had grown quite a bit. Putting my faith in the Curse Resistance, I took on the Khezas with a complacent attitude. It turned out that the final boss really was deserving of the position.

‘To fight that bastard, I need to kill all of the death knights, skeleton soldiers and other priests. I need to fight it only after I clean up everyone else.

I am almost there.

Let’s not be impatient.’

*

[Human, you are blessed by false gods! You...]

“Just shut the hell up! You numbskull bitch!”

Even patience had limits!

The priests kept on saying similar lines as if they were

programmed to say them. Having heard the lines so many times, now, I became infuriated just from hearing creepy voices from those priests that looked like they were wearing skull masks.

“Just transform into the squid already. Let’s end this now.”

This time, it really was the time to end this once and for all.

It had been a very long time.

I could go on in verbose detail about how long it had been. However, nothing was more accurate than saying that it was excessively long.

[You cleared the Sixth Floor of the Tutorial in Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your status abnormality and injuries will be recovered.]

[You obtained 2000 points as the clear reward.]

[You obtained 2000 points for being the first one to clear the floor.]

[There are many gods who are showing positive responses toward you. You obtained 9100 points.]

[There are many gods who are showing negative response toward you. 600 points were deducted.]

[Based on your play records, additional reward will be given.]

[Many gods would like to give you a special skill as the reward.]

[Voting results: 43 Yes, 1 No.]

[Would you like to accept it?]

[You obtained Soul Steal Lv.1.]

*

[God of Slowness would like to bestow the destiny of apostle to you.]

[Would you like to receive the test to prove your worthiness to become an apostle?]

[God of Adventure is panicking.]

[God of Adventure would like to bestow the destiny of apostle to you.]

[Would you like to receive the test to prove your worthiness to become an apostle?]

[God of Slowness is displeased.]

Chapter 54 - Tutorial 60th Floor (Part 6)

“With the spring wind in the air~ Flower petals flowing~”

‘For some odd reason, I found the sound while writing on paper exhilarating.’

Unlike the usual, I was writing a book instead of a letter to Lee Yeun-hye.

It was magic instructions for the hatchling that was going to be born from the egg soon.

I learned something shocking a few days ago.

It was the fact that there was no magic instruction for dragons.

It was absurd since dragons were also called the race of magic.

The reason for the lack of magic instruction texts for the dragons was quite ridiculous.

Apparently dragons naturally realize magic and learn it as they grow, so there was no need for educational magic texts to teach them anything with. Also, because dragons’ memories do not fade over time, there was no need to record any magic in writing either.

I was dumbfounded for a while.

‘What despicable beings.

Ah, my bad.

I’m sorry.

I didn’t direct that comment at you, [Yong Yong](#).’

[TL: Yong is the pronunciation for the word “dragon” in Korean.]

I apologized to the egg inside the incubator. I directed my gaze back to the book.

Although I understood that dragons didn’t need any education in learning magic because they learned them on their own, I figured that still providing them with education would not hurt.

‘If I teach this dragon magic, it will learn magic faster.’

To clear the 61st Floor, the most important thing that I needed the hatchling to learn first was polymorph.

It was a pretty high level magic, so I had no intention of waiting until the baby dragon learned the magic on its own.

So, here I was, writing an educational magic textbook.

I used the textbooks by other beings as the basis. I cut off the parts that dragons didn't need to know. I focused on activation magic spells and internal mana operation and utilization.

I figured there was no need to teach everything about magic.

It was going to be enough as long as it allowed quicker learning of the basics.

Like that, I was rolling my pen. However, I saw a message opening in front of my eyes.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Report.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Nothing to report at 60th Floor of the Hell Difficulty. Don't you get bored doing this every month?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Aren't you getting sick of hearing me nag? The message always tells you what time it is. Why are you always late?]

'Her words ended with a question.

I shouldn't have agitated her.'

For a moment, I was forgetting about the fact that Park Jung-ah had been having really bad days lately, making her emotionally strained.

‘In times like this, it is best not to face her.

From past experiences, I know well that I’ll only see blood if I carelessly agitate her.

Instead of fighting a battle that I will lose for sure, I should just throw off the chess table.’

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Phew... I am sorry. I’ve not been thinking of the passage of time lately. I’ve also been trying hard not to look at the time message either. I ended up not checking the time before it was too late.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I am sorry. I am feeling a little weird lately. I think I had been trapped here for too long. Maybe I’m getting metal illness again. Nowadays, even medicines are not being effective.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Ah... Um. I’m sorry. I didn’t know. I was too insensitive.]

‘Ha. Take that.

You have no idea how long I have waited to say that line.’

Park Jung-ah was probably feeling even sorrier for criticizing me so many times for being late.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: That's right. You were being too hard on me.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Huh? Um... Right. You don't need to report regularly from now on. I'll contact you only when I need to.]

As I planned...

It worked out insanely well.

I wondered why I am so brilliant.

During a moment of danger, I turned it into an opportunity. It was magnificent.

'Looks like I'll have one less bothersome thing to do from now on.

While at it, let's try to reduce it by one more.'

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I am sorry, but can you please check up on Lee Yeun-hye before she enters the Stage?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Okay. I can do that, but why? Won't it be better for you to do it yourself?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I'm going to go check out the 61st Floor for a bit.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Why there?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I used too many points. I need to earn more.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: I got it. All right.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Tell her to not forget the message she needs to deliver to the manager.]

With that, another bothersome thing was off my list.

It felt great.

‘Should I continue to ask Park Jung-ah to check on Lee Yeon-hye from now on?’

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: If you can, you do it. The newbie is still at the Sixth Floor, right?]

Tsk.

Lee Yeon-hye's growth had entered a stable rate.

I had been worried for her about being at the Sixth Floor, but it seemed she was getting used to it pretty well.

I even thought she might get stuck there forever without finding a way to break through the floor.

Fortunately, in her own unique way, she was diligently progressing her conquest step by step.

This was the Sixth Floor, so I figured it would take a little more time. It looked like I didn't need to worry about her getting stuck there.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: That brat is amazing too. From how you see it, how strong do you think she is?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Even I think she is quite talented. She is not as talented as me, but she is top-notch when it comes to her abilities as a caster. She is also good at utilizing mana.]

To overcome the drawbacks of being an archer at lower floors, Lee Yeon-hye tried to master activation magic spells.

I agreed on her idea as well.

Now, the efficiency and power of the archer and caster combination was beyond proven.

The research on activation magic had been progressing for a long time in Tutorial by many people. So, Lee Yeon-hye was able to obtain information on her own using the points through the Community.

As for magic that were difficult to master, I wrote the instructional texts and sent them to her to master them.

Of course, just knowing the mastery method and reading the instructional texts on magic did not necessarily lead to everyone learning the activation magic.

For those who were not talented at mana, it was better to not even think about using activation magic.

Activation magic spells were easier to master than traditional magic spells. However...

Activation magic spells were focused on casting.

Once the skill was acquired, it could be activated without much difficulty by just reciting the activation word and supplying the mana at the right time.

During the early days in the Tutorial, people in the Community called activation magic as half-witted magic spells and downgraded them. However, before long, the activation magic pushed aside the traditional magic and became the most dominant type.

Compared to traditional magic, the activation magic spells were not as powerful. Also, activation magic spells could not be altered at all. Despite these drawbacks, the ease of usage and quick casting speed more than made up for the drawbacks.

Nowadays, of all mage class players, it was hard to find anyone who was not an activation magic based mage.

Traditional mages such as casters or shamans required high level of understanding of magic and long casting time to use magic skillfully.

Because of these, the traditional magic spells were hard to make good use of during battles even in the easy difficulty. That was the general consensus on the traditional magic's usefulness.

Except extreme few players who had researcher type personalities and myself, there was hardly anyone that knew how to use traditional magic properly.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: By the way. I've heard rumors lately again. I think something is going to be held again.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Right... There was information like that. It isn't confirmed at the moment. I need to look into it some more.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: If there is going to be something, it

would be nice if it was the day of the great harmony. Other things are such a bother.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: If it really turns out to be the day of the great harmony, everyone is a dead meat. It hasn't been all that long since what happened last time, and they managed to make another hole?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: You take it easy too. You've been too harsh to the grunts under your command that they are on their way to the graves. The guys in Order of Vigilance had been complaining and crying to me daily.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Who did?]

Before long, her sentences became short again.

I could not afford to catch fire from her fury, so I told her the list of names politely.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Ugh...]

I was fairly certain the omitted parts were swears.

I wished good luck for the grunts who probably were not aware that they were dead.

'I am sorry.'

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Instead of punishing them, ease up a bit and raise them. Now even Kim Min-huk left the Tutorial. You can't keep on punishing your underlings.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Kim Min-huk had been like the mom for everyone in the Order of Vigilance. Now that he left the Tutorial, you need to double as that mom role.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: ... I really can't do something like that.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: You need to do it now. Otherwise, you need to find someone who can take on that role.]

'I bet there isn't anyone.

I bet you won't be able to find someone for that.

Park Jung-ah has difficulty in trusting others.

With Kim Min-huk gone, she only has a few people she can trust... No. It is possible I am the only one she trusts.'

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Why didn't you stop Kim Min-huk when he tried to divorce you? You should have.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: ... Who knew he would leave the

Tutorial right away after divorcing me. I just thought it was just another fight for married couples.]

‘She certainly has a point.

That bastard had been lecturing me about the relationship between a man and a woman, how dating works, and etcetera. Now, to think he got divorced and left the Tutorial...

As they say, you never know what could happen in life.’

I finished the writing after being on it for a long while.

I put the notes and writing tools to the side of the desk and placed the desk with things on it as-is into the inventory.

‘I was almost finished writing the magic instructions.

It would be better to finish the rest after looking at the hatchling’s type.

I wonder what color it will be.

Personally, when someone mentions “dragon,” usually gold, red or black colors come to mind.

Maybe the color might end up being something completely

dumbfounding.

Personally, I wish it turns out to be a red dragon.

I don't have any particular reason for the preference, but red dragons are just so cool.'

Like that, I indulged in useless thoughts as I went close to the incubator to say hello to the egg.

"Hold the port for me while I'm gone, Yong Yong. Your daddy is off to earn some money."

'I probably won't be able to come back any time soon.

Clearing the 61st Floor will take a bit of time.

Let's see. The temperature and moisture control devices are working normally.

I don't need to worry about noise pollution or someone breaking in while I'm gone since I'm the only one in the 60th Floor.

Um... Still, I'm worried for some reason.'

I couldn't figure out why I was worried. Moreover, because of my worries, I could not step away.

‘This... I don’t think I can just go like this.

Tsk.

I wonder if a parent who left the child to play near a water would feel like this?

No, is it a little different?

Anyway, I need a safety device.’

I waved my hand in the empty air, drew two magic circles on the floor, and stepped on one of them.

“Summon.”

Light poured out from the other magic circle and came together. The lump of light started to form the shape of a human.

When the brightness of the light subsided, there was a man standing on the magic circle. He looked identical to me.

“What are you looking at, original bastard.”

‘What the, look at this little son of a bitch. He has no manners at all.’

“Watch the house, you clone bastard. Keep the egg safe too.”

“... Do you realize where this place is? Do you have dementia? Is it something like that? In that case, why don't you hand over the position of being the original to me?”

“Something like that will never happen, you clone bastard.”

‘He is my clone, although he is incredibly rude and weak as hell. I cannot believe he was created based on me.’

“Who are you calling weak as hell, you original bastard.”

‘Like this, we can read each other's minds.

Even from distance, I can feel his emotions and conditions, so I can come right away when something happens to the egg.

I just need to think of this bratty clone as a high performance alarm magic.’

“Don't define me like that to whatever you want.”

I made this asshole for the purpose of clearing the 61st Floor. Unfortunately, when I realized it was not possible to clear the 61st Floor with him, he became almost useless.

‘It’s good that I found a use for him for watching the house.

Even dogshit can be...’

“If you have any more degrading thoughts about me, I am going to go on strike.”

‘I cannot let that happen.’

“Well then, I’ll go earn some points. Make sure to watch the house.”

“All right. Come back safe. It is all right if you never come back.”

I walked toward the portal that lead to the 61st Floor’s Stage as I listened my bratty clone.

Chapter 55 - Tutorial 61st Floor (1)

I lied down on a gigantic ice throne and rolled around.

Compared to the motel room I had been using at the 60th Floor's residential area, this throne was at least twice as big.

It would have taken someone with a butt five meters wide to sit here as intended to. I once questioned if this thing could be called a throne.

However, the last owner of this throne clearly called it a throne.

‘So, it must be a throne.

It's good not to question something that already has an answer.’

It was a habit I developed while I was stuck at the 60th Floor, not being able to clear the 61st Floor to be precise.

It was best not to look back on something that was already decided.

‘I cannot find the answer.

I don't even know if there is an answer.

I already wrote my answer and submitted it as such a long ago. However, I don't know when I'll get the result back. I don't know if there is an end either.'

So, I decided not to look back.

Things like a question that does not have an answer or regretting a decision I was not sure about only rotted my mind away.

'Maybe it is the cool air from the throne. I feel refreshed.

No, this is actually a special attribute of this place.'

It seemed like just sitting around idly on my butt had cleared my head and mind.

It could be said that it felt like taking a nap at Kiri Kiri's green plain.

That reminded me that it had been a while since I met Kiri Kiri. Also, it had been ages since I took a nap in her world.

Um...

I quickly erased the thoughts that were coming up in my mind.

I came to the 61st Floor to cleanse the leftovers in my head and

chest. If I accumulated negative thoughts instead, that was no good. I could not let that be.

A message came while I was rolling around on top of the throne of ice.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: I just talked to Lee Yeun-hye.]

‘Well done.

Good work.’

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: By the way, are you really busy right now? If you have time to spare, won’t it be better for you to see her off?]

‘Why is this lass on the edge again?

Is it just the mood?’

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I’m busy, I’m ultra-busy.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: You don’t look busy at all. Next time, don’t ask me to do things like this.]

‘Why is she acting like this again?

Was there a problem?’

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: No, it’s not like that. I think Lee Yeun-hye hates me a little.]

‘... That’s so out of the blue.

What are you saying? Do you think there is another person in this entire Tutorial that would welcome you and like you?’

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Enough with bullshit. Seriously, am I being too sensitive?]

‘How should I respond to this?

There is a long journey ahead to get to the right answer for this, and there are too many traps laying all over the path.

It feels like this will come back as a poison no matter how I answer it.’

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: You have that independent image. Maybe she is just nervous?]

‘People call you iron-blooded witch or a sociopath wearing the mask of justice just to send people to graves. I’m saying maybe Lee Yeun-hye shriveled because someone like that sent her a personal message.

However, Park Jung-ah doesn't hate that independent image.

She is thinking it is helpful in maintaining the Order of Vigilance.

I made the right choice of using this as the reason for Lee Yeun-hye's reaction.

It won't spoil Park Jung-ah's mood. Moreover, it is a very plausible explanation.'

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Is that so? Anyway, don't ask me to do this kind of things from now on. I can't speak politely to people. It feels like I'm getting rashes.]

'Are you saying you were polite to her?

Maybe Lee Yeun-hye's response was on the edge because you were like that.

When someone suddenly changes attitude, others can see that as a sign of aggression.

I read it at a psychology book.'

Around the Round 60, a player who used to be a doctor of psychology left the Tutorial after clearing it. Since then, the

greatest authority in psychology and mental neurology had been none other than myself.

It was because I had been diagnosing the patient with the most serious mental illness daily.

Of course, I didn't send my thoughts to her through the message.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Also, you remember what I told you before, right? I told you it looks like something might be held again. Information about that is going to come in soon, so keep checking messages instead of ignoring it.]

‘Yay...

I do need to continue clearing the 61st Floor, but well, I do have a reason.

Something is going to be held, huh...

Um... While at it, I think I should test that thing.

I should test if I can send my clone to other difficulties.’

My clone was considered as a summoned monster instead of an actual player in Tutorial. I wondered if that meant I could send it to another difficulty by sending it to another person.

‘In that case, send it to the Order of Vigilance...

No. Perhaps I can send the clone to the outside world.

Damn it. Why did I think of this now?

I can send my clone to the outside world and switch my soul with the clone.

That’s perfect?’

[Perfect? Do dogs have horns? I’m not an ordinary summon monster, you original bastard.]

‘You were listening?’

[Isn’t that obvious you retard? Also, another difficulty is a completely different world from here. Once my link with you is gone, I can no longer maintain my life, you dumbass.]

[You already know all this, don’t you? Enough of your useless thoughts. I don’t want to die for the sake of your stupid experiment-oriented mindset.]

‘Tsk.

He truly is useless.’

[What did you say?]

When I first made that bastard, I was full of hope for clearing the 61st Floor.

However, now that I made that brat, I really had no use for him.

I just ended up with symptoms of shattered mind after trying to split my soul.

Tsk.

[That's my fault? You original bastard... I feel like the youngest son who was born from failed birth control.]

My clone's analogy was pretty good. I laughed by myself.

My mind was at a bit of ease now, so I could afford to laugh at a joke like that.

I should have come to the 61st Floor sooner.

I came to the floor to earn some points and also clear my mind before hatchling came out of the egg.

I felt so refreshed. I wondered why I didn't come here sooner.

I knew this feeling won't last long. Still, it felt great for the moment.

I got up from the seat.

I had been rolling around doing nothing long enough. It was time for me to move.

I came down from the gigantic ice throne and headed to the portal.

[Will you enter?]

‘No. You know I can’t.’

“Return.”

I mumbled the activation word. I left the space covered in ice. Instead, I was teleported to a dark and narrow space.

There was a familiar looking bonfire.

It was the entrance of the 61st Floor.

There were three portals in front of me.

One of them lead to the 60th Floor.

The other two each led to different Stages.

I needed two parties and clear both Stages simultaneously.

Once the Stages were cleared, I could enter the boss room after activating the portals on both sides.

It was simple.

However, summon monsters or clones were not acknowledged as a different challenger when entering the boss room.

‘What about Yong Yong?’

Yong Yong can be considered a resident of Tutorial who was born here.

Could Yong Yong be acknowledged as a challenger?

Yong Yong is not my summon monster or clone.

If the dragon gets acknowledged as a separate entity... Um...

Actually, that is unlikely to happen.

Still, well... I got to try, as always.

I can't just do nothing.'

"Enter."

A moment later, I was standing in a scorching desert.

I had seen this place before, and it was still horrible to look at.

I was not receiving damage from the heat, but I was not feeling comfortable in this horrible weather condition either.

It was extremely hot and dry.

Moreover, the wind was mixed with sand. It was annoying.

I cast mana shield to block the sand wind and walked forward.

"Land-folding."

I had no intention of standing in this unpleasant environment for long. I had no intention of fighting sticky monsters one by one

here either.

‘Let’s just get to the last room.’

I walked as I folded the space. I was able to get to the end of the desert before long.

At the end of the desert, there was an oasis with a portal in the center. I walked toward the top of the portal.

‘This suddenly reminds me of the time when I got to the 61st Floor for the first time.’

At that time, I already heard information about the 61st Floor from Kiri Kiri when I cleared the 59th Floor.

Still, thinking it might be different somehow, with expectations, I stepped on to the portal.

“Teleport.”

*

[Welcome. It’s been a while.]

A giant’s voice could be heard from a distance. It sound like it was echoing from the far.

Next to the huge, empty throne, there was a red giant who was sitting next it. I lifted my head and looked at the giant.

There were red hot magna overflowing around him.

“It sure has, old man.”

[I see you visited another place before coming here. How's the former queen doing? Same as always?]

“Well, same as always of course. She is still mighty concerned about skin aging.”

An explosive noise could be heard. It was painful in my ears.

Instead of the pain, the fact that I could not identify the noise hurt me more.

My body was still that of a human being.

I focused my mind to cover my ears with mana field, and I was able to identify the noise.

It was that old giant's laughter.

[She has frozen skin, yet she is concerned about aging? Looks like

her stupidity has not changed with passage of time!]

“I can’t be sure about that? The former queen said the same about you.”

Once again, a deafeningly loud laughter spread through the area.

‘Will you stop laughing?’

[About your arrangement, is it not yet?]

‘Arrangement? Can that be called an arrangement?’

“It’s far. I still have a long way to go.”

[That’s a vexing fate. You possess incredible strength, yet you still cannot be used. You had already become the most powerful sword of all, yet you are still not complete.]

“Maybe this is also a step in the direction toward the completion.”

[You are saying something similar to a certain god. Are you saying you are still an incomplete sword?]

[There is no sword that’s being created without a purpose. When you become a complete sword, what will you do with your

strength?]

‘What is this question for?

It’s a difficult question to answer.’

“I’m not sure. For now... I won’t be able to decide what the sword is for until the tempering is complete. Don’t you think?”

[Because you are still an incomplete sword? That’s a funny way to put it. In that case, what about the intent of the sword makers?]

“I have my own free will, old man. I am not like a sword.”

‘... My voice is getting lower from being so annoyed.

Is he interested in hearing the answer again?’

[In that case, what does your free will tell you?]

“I don’t know.”

[Hahaha. That’s right. You don’t know. However, we do, don’t we? King.]

“That’s right.”

‘This old man really doesn’t know to think about others.’

“Let’s stop talking about dangerous things.”

[I am sorry. Because I am getting old, I want to hear a definite answer. That’s why.]

[When the time comes, decide carefully. We already entrusted our will to you.]

[Your indecisiveness should not lead to ruining the decision.]

[In that case, shall we begin?]

The red giant finished what he had to say. He picked up the giant sword that was stuck on the floor and lifted it up.

With that as the signal, the giant knights who were sleeping inside the magna walked out of it one after the other.

Two hundred units.

Considering the strength of each unit, the fact that they were all gathered in this space alone was irrational. Their combined strength was that significant.

[King. Please keep up the good work as always.]

The old giant and the two hundred giant knights raised their humungous swords and assumed poses that appeared to be signs of respects.

I knew nothing of their courtesy, but I could at least tell that they were ready for the duel.

I didn't bother to bring out any weapon to wield.

My body was the weapon, so I just took a step forward and raised my hand.

*

[Lee Ho-jae, 61st Floor: It is not the day of the great harmony?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: That's right. We didn't find out anything yet. We don't know the date or the reason for it being held. However, it is definitely not the day of the great harmony that will be held.]

‘This is going to give me headache.’

Chapter 56 - Tutorial 11th Floor (1)

[You have cleared Tutorial, Hell difficulty, 11th Floor.]

[You are healed of all injuries and status effects.]

[You have received 2000 points for clearing the Floor.]

[You have received 2000 points for being the first one to clear the Floor.]

[Many gods are pleased with your actions. You have received 6000 points.]

[Many gods are displeased with your actions. 1100 points are deducted.]

[An additional reward is given according to your performance.]

[Would you like to accept?]

“Yep.”

[You acquired great poison resistance Lv.1.]

[Poison resistance Lv.4 was combined with great poison resistance Lv.1.]

[You acquired great poison resistance Lv.2.]

‘Oh... great poison resistance...’

I already have seen my pain resistance getting upgraded to the great pain resistance before, so I was aware that a higher rank existed beyond the regular skill rank.

Poison resistance skill was definitely difficult to grow.

Other than the poison on the Second Floor’s traps, most of the poisons available were either on enemies’ weapons or inside their bodies.

Although this was obvious, getting hit by them on purpose for the sake of increasing poison resistance was like committing suicide.

So, my poison resistance had not changed a lot since I increased it on the Second Floor, but I ended up with the great poison resistance skill. This was great.

I felt like the effort I put into before to raise the poison resistance

was wasted. That was too bad. However, I obtained level 2 version of the great poison resistance, so it was not bad.

For now... I plummeted on where I stood.

“Ugh.”

I was tired.

It was a bit too much this time.

It was not about the difficulty. The amount of effort needed to clear the floor was seriously too much.

The clear condition for the 11th Floor was stealing a treasure chest in middle of an underground city that was most valued by all monsters residing in the city.

The problem was that I could not find the treasure chest no matter how many of the monsters I slayed.

There were so many chests.

Beyond several hundreds, it was in order of several thousands.

I had no idea which of them was the most valued one among all underground city monster people.

First, I tried to use the knowledge before the time of Babel and tried to interrogate a monster man for information.

It was a waste of time.

Instead of giving up information to the enemy, apparently all monster people chose suicide without hesitation.

It was as if they could do it at a flip of a switch somewhere inside. At will, they could instantly kill themselves. Their special ability was incredibly annoying.

My interrogation skills had improved in a short while recently, but they were useless against these monster people. I was not able to get any information out of them.

In the end, searching every inch of the gigantic city was my only option.

I dug the dirt on the garden of the underground city's castle where its king resided, and I found a hidden underground passage.

I found a key at the end of that passage. When I put the key inside the gap at the engraving of the handle on the king's throne, a treasure room appeared behind the throne.

‘... How is anyone supposed to clear this?’

If I did not turn the king's palace garden upside down out of pure frustration, I probably won't have found this.

Perhaps I should have intuitively realized that there is a treasure room behind the throne after seeing the engraving and just break through the wall? Maybe that is the right answer?

Perhaps...

This reminds me of the time when I was young. I played the English version of the Tomb Raider. I played it while frequently searching the English dictionary.

I remember one time where I had to find the hidden place by following the sound of the clock ticking inside the mansion.

Um... I got motion sickness from the stress and frustration. Because of dizzy spells, I couldn't play 3D games for a month.

I'm definitely weak against these kind of clearing methods.

If I am to claim that I need a partner, I need a partner who can cover me in this kind of tasks.

In RPG games, there are classes like thieves or adventurers.

They can install or disengage traps and find hidden enemies or

places.

They can never be the main character, but for the sake of making the main lead's story to progress smoothly, such an extra character is absolutely necessary.

I do have a bastard who I could call as a comrade, but that one is similar to me, so that brat would be of no use in this situation just like me.

Ugh.

I guess I'll just have to play the cards I was dealt.

Instead of aimlessly taking on these kind of challenges, I should get used to deduction, search and etcetera.

I think there will be more of this kind of missions.'

Having organized my thoughts, I placed my hand on the portal.

*

"It's been a while, Kiri Kiri."

"Yep. You came alone this time."

“I think the time limit expired. It just disappeared. As you said before, the memory will be maintained, right?”

“Yep.”

“Then it is all right.”

“Hehe. This time, it took a while, didn’t it?”

“It sure did.”

It was a ridiculous mission. I had to find a hidden treasure chest. I had no choice but to get here late because I had been digging around everywhere.

I replied with a few words. Out of frustration, Kiri Kiri turned her lips to look like a duck.

“Heng... Your reactions are boring now.”

‘Now what’s up with her?’

“Last time, you cried like a baby, saying it’s been a very long time since you saw me. It was fun.”

‘... This girl’s attitude is growing more and more annoying.

Well, what she said is true, so I can't really talk back.

All right. I decided.'

"No cake for you today."

"Ahhhhhhh. NOOOOOOOOO!"

Kiri Kiri threw a tantrum and rushed at me. I pushed her away and assumed my position to take a nap.

I was tired.

'Let's sleep for a bit and think after I wake up.'

"I'm sorry. I won't! I was wrong! Buy me a cake!"

I told her I might buy her a cake if she kept quiet while I slept. Like that, I made her close her mouth and went to sleep.

*

"Uuuaaaaaam~

How long did I sleep?"

[Round 14, Day 6, 16:30]

‘I didn’t sleep for long.

Actually, should I consider this as having slept long?’

I had been having a hard time sleeping lately.

There was no need to sleep in the waiting room, so I didn’t think too much about this fact.

Meanwhile, inside the Stage, because I was exposed to danger, having the sleep time reduced was not a bad thing.

Time passed like that for a while, and I could no longer fall asleep even when I wanted to.

In the past, I was worried that this might happen, so I had regular sleep and meals even when I was in the waiting room.

Out of anxiousness, I focused on clearing the Sixth Floor while eliminating the time for sleep, meals and even rest. It seemed my regular daily rhythm was gone after doing that.

Thanks to the waiting room’s recovery effect, I could handle the stamina issue. However, mental recovery through the sleep could

not be replaced by anything.

So, I had been making up for the lost sleep by taking a nap whenever I visit Kiri Kiri's plain.

Still, I felt fortunate that I could sleep comfortably at Kiri Kiri's plain.

It would have been really difficult if I couldn't even sleep here.

As for Kiri Kiri...

Well, as usual, she slept using my stomach as her pillow.

I stroke Kiri Kiri's head between her large ears.

Kiri Kiri was sleeping soundly like a child. I looked at her face.

She had such an adorable face.

She acted like a kid often, so I thought of her as my little sister or cousin.

'When a friend in middle school raised a rabbit at his home, did he say rabbits don't like being touched on the nose or like being touched on the nose? I don't remember.

Actually, this lass has the face of a human being, so maybe it won't matter?'

I just realized that I had many things to ask Kiri Kiri this time.

Since the Sixth Floor, I had been saving the chances for asking her questions so I could ask her a lot later.

'For now, let's organize my thoughts so I can ask Kiri Kiri right away when she wakes up.'

From when this troubling thought started and when I saw the clear message after completing the long conquest of the Sixth Floor around when the Round 12 was coming to an end...

[You cleared the Sixth Floor of the Tutorial in Hell Difficulty.]

It was long. Very long.

I could still remember clearly how I felt back then.

The experience through the Sixth Floor was something I never want to go through again.

I liked moving forward.

Being stuck at a place due to inadequacies in my abilities was a really horrible experience.

The broken man's life that I led after retiring from the professional gaming came to my mind while I was at the Sixth Floor. With that memory overlapping with the stress through the Sixth Floor, it was mentally traumatizing.

I wondered if I was going to spin the wheel here forever.

I was at the mental limit.

I might have lost my mind if there was another boss after that squid looking boss and delayed the conquest of the floor further.

Anyway, things worked out well at the end since I got through it at the last moment.

However, I got a new thing to worry about since I cleared the Sixth Floor.

[God of Slowness would like to bestow the destiny of apostle to you.]

[Would you like to receive the test to prove your worthiness to become an apostle?]

[God of Adventure would like to bestow the destiny of apostle to you.]

[Would you like to receive the test to prove your worthiness to become an apostle?]

‘What should I do?’

If just one god proposed the test for the destiny of apostle, I would not be agonizing over it like this.’

I was worried that the god I refused would retaliate out of anger if I chose one.

From what I experienced at the Fourth Floor, I knew gods could blind my vision and teleport me.

It meant they could kill me in middle of battle if they wanted.

I had to be very careful.

‘When I finished the Sixth Floor conquest, as soon as I met Kiri Kiri...

Wait, perhaps it was not immediately...’

Thinking about what happened during the meeting with Kiri Kiri after clearing the Sixth Floor made me feel a little embarrassed.

‘Let’s forget about it. That’s the best answer.’

Kuhum...

I asked Kiri Kiri about the proposals made by the gods.

Of course, she was not able to answer my questions.

It was because information about gods were expensive, very expensive.

Since then, in order to hear Kiri Kiri’s advice about the gods’ proposals, I had been saving my chances on questions.

I asked her back then about when I would be able to hear the answer. She said she will be able to tell me when I clear the 11th Floor.

[God of Adventure is anxious.]

Messages like that appeared occasionally. However, I didn’t let them make me rush into making the decision.

I felt fortunate that I could postpone making a decision until I confirmed the information first.

‘Things for me to check are...

If I can accept both gods’ proposals.

If there is a penalty for doing so.

If I can accept one side and refuse the other side.

If there is a penalty or benefit for doing that.

Finally, if I should choose just one side, which side Kiri Kiri recommends.

Did I cover everything?

If I end up with some allowances left for more questions, I should ask about the God of Adventure’s preference.’

Other than that the God of Adventure was a fool and acted a little like an idiot, I knew nothing about the god’s personality or preferences.

‘Just like how I heard about the God of Slowness’s personality and principles, I should hear some about the God of Adventure.

If I still end up with some allowances left after that, I guess I should ask about information on 12th Floor.

Now, that's enough organizing.

I just need Kiri Kiri... to wake up.

This lass is sleeping way too soundly.'

She was snoring rhythmically. She was sleeping with such a happy look on her face. I couldn't wake her up after noticing all that.

'For now, just a little while longer. I'll let her sleep just for a while longer.'

[Lee Ho-jae, 11th Floor: Did anything happen?]

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: Yes. Something big.]

'Something big...

Is there going to be another day of great harmony?

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: Uh... I heard it is going to be held again before this round ends. It's happening almost every other

round now.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 11th Floor: What is it this time?]

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: That's the most serious problem. I have no idea why it is happening again.]

‘That is a big problem.’

[Lee Ho-jae, 11th Floor: Well... Keep up the hard work.]

‘I am sorry to say this, but I cannot help you on anything.

Not only am I on a different difficulty, I am no good at finding hidden problems and solving them.

It would be best for you to assign that task to someone else and let me do what I do best during the day of the great harmony.’

[Lee Ho-jae, 11th Floor: What about Park Jung-ah?]

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: Well, she is causing a ruckus again. She is thinking really hard about how to punish the members of the Order who failed to hunt down the people who committed crimes in their areas.]

‘That's not good.

Causing a stir inside the Order of Vigilance is a serious problem.

If the members of the Order get divided or even decide to turn against each other, the Order could get disbanded like that.

Also, from the outside, the Order of Vigilance has to look strong.

The Order is in charge of judging and delivering punishment to all criminals.

They have the power rivaling that of a country's justice system.'

Also, the source of this power was standing on a very shaky foundation.

The authority given to the Order was based on the power demonstrated by the rankers during the very first day of the great harmony, my own power to be exact.

Also, there was the charisma and ruthlessness of Park Jung-ah, the one who executed the members of the Representative Federation.

Objectively speaking, we were oppressing the people with strength and fear.

We could not afford to let the outsiders see that the Order was

faltering inside.

‘If the Order of Vigilance loses the public’s trust, their judgement and punishment would also lose people’s support.

Without people’s support, we are nothing but just a violent organization that forces our rules to others.

If people made up their mind and stood up to oppose us, there won’t be anything we could do.’

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: I know, you rascal. I bet Park Jung-ah knows that too. She is doing that because she’s just upset. She also needs to do that.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 11th Floor: Anyway, watch her closely so she doesn’t cause an accident.]

Kim Min-huk said he got it. With that, our conversation ended.

‘Judging from what he said, it does not look like the problem will be resolved before the day of the great harmony happens.

In that case... It looks like I might end up with something that I will need to do.

Um...

Anyway, Kiri Kiri... This lass...

It's about time she woke up.'

To wake her up, I pushed in my pinky into her nose that was making snoring sound so well.

"Kiiiiiaaong!"

Along with her unique shouting, Kiri Kiri was revived. She threw a punch.

Of course, its power was pathetic.

*

"There is no problem if I accept both?"

Kiri Kiri had cream on her lips. I asked her again.

"Yep!"

'... Why are you telling me this now...'

"It's because you said you will make the decision after hearing all relevant information."

‘I did say that.

Um...’

“Kiri Kiri.”

“What is it?”

“Stop eating that. Hand over the cake.

Chapter 57 - Tutorial 11th Floor (2)

“I can choose both? Both the God of Adventure and God of Slowness?”

“Yep!”

It seemed I worried for nothing about the potential consequence for refusing a side.

“There is no disadvantage from doing so?”

“There kind of is one. Both gods’ tests probably will become more difficult. Also, in the end, you can become the apostle for only one god. Only thing you can accept from both are the tests.”

“Can you explain a little about the test?”

Kiri Kiri tilted her head around a few times. She then crunched down on the ground and drew scribbles on the ground.

It was a method unique to Kiri Kiri when she was thinking.

The letters and geometric shapes that Kiri Kiri drew on the ground was completely incomprehensible to me even when I tried to figure it out.

Even the knowledge before the time of Babel was no use for

them.

‘Are those letters just not included in the knowledge or is it because my skill level on the knowledge is not high enough?’

I made sure to remember what she scribbled.

“The test to become an apostle is literally what it is. It is a test to prove that you are worthy of becoming an apostle. The test is usually decided based on the corresponding god’s preferences and the challenger’s personality.”

“Can you tell me in detail about the kind of tests? Examples?”

“I don’t know about that. It is not that I am refusing to tell you. It is just that I am not capable of answering that question because I do not know the answer. To begin with, each god has different standards. Also, the test’s standard changes depending on individual challengers. So, I don’t have anything in particular that I could tell you.”

‘So, you can’t tell me anything because you don’t know.

I think this is the first time for Kiri Kiri to tell me she doesn’t know something.’

“What is it then? Is it going to be all hands off after I take the test?”

“Um... I’m not sure. For someone to receive a god’s power and start walking the path to become an apostle means that a god found that person’s principles and behaviors likable. Based on this fact and the gods’ personalities, a prediction could be made at least.”

‘A prediction, huh...’

“Of course, I can’t make the prediction for you. You need to do it yourself.”

I needed more information.

“First, can you tell me about the God of Adventure and God of Slowness? Not to the point of spending all of information allowances. Just enough for me to get a sense on them.”

“All right. I explained about the God of Slowness last time. I’ll start with the God of Adventure first.”

Kiri Kiri crunched down and sat on the ground again. She was like a bunny.

I felt a sense of de ja vu.

“You... If you act like that and run off somewhere while forgetting everything, I won’t give you cake. Got it?”

“Ah, I won’t do that!”

‘In that case, hurry up, focus and stop thinking so hard.’

“God of Adventure likes to see someone fighting against adversity and achieving the dream after the end of a long journey. One thing about the God of Adventure that is very different from the God of Slowness is with regards to who is included in that perspective.”

“Perspective?”

“God of Slowness also likes someone fighting on and not yielding to hardship, but God of Slowness’ perspective is always from the first person’s perspective, the God of Slowness’ own perspective only. The apostle also needs to view the world that way as well.”

“What about the God of Adventure?”

“For the God of Adventure, the perspective includes not just the apostle, but the comrades around the apostle, other individuals involved in incidents, enemies, and even others who are not related at all. You need to think about them all carefully.”

‘Um... I can think of a theory here.’

When I first heard the name, God of Adventure, the first thing that came to my mind was stories of adventures that were

archetypical.

I was thinking about that thing.

The Japanese style RPG games.

In those games, there were not just the brave hero the main character, but various comrades in the party who each possessed unique magnetic personalities, foes who each had involved and verbose back stories, beautiful and warm friendship and love that bloomed in midst of all things going on, idealistic justice that always tries to save the oppressed people, valor demonstrated by the characters who do not give up in face of hardships...

The adventure stories of outdated romanticism...

‘If God of Adventure’s principle is something like that... I think that’s fairly consistent with the behavior that this god had been showing usually.’

The God of Adventure was proud of me or was concerned for me whenever I was going through hardships or felt defeated.

In particular, whenever I made up my mind to show determination and continue fighting on when facing a hopeless situation, the God of Adventure showed responses.

It was similar to this when the God of Adventure showed interest in me for the first time at the First Floor.

Also, there was the time when I killed the Goblin King and when I refused to revive Idaltaru. When I thought about those instances...

‘Well, they are all conjectures, but...’

“In the end, God of Slowness and God of Adventure have similar expectations for their apostles. It is just that they have emotional differences in the process and preferences.”

‘To put it simply, I think I can say that the God of Adventure likes party play, and God of Slowness prefers solo play.

If that is the case, choosing the God of Slowness would fit me the best.’

“Um... In that case, can you make a recommendation for me about who would be the best choice for me?”

I didn’t always follow her advice to the teeth.

There were times when I purchased the items she recommended and not use them. There was a time when I gave an item away to someone. Although she told me that focusing on passive skill growth is inefficient, I once focused on working to increase the passive skills.

However, anyway, Kiri Kiri's advices were always invaluable.

It was probably because she had plenty of experiences and knowledge as an advisor. Also, she had the ability to know my current condition and desires precisely as well as what I needed.

I knew that asking for her advice on this was going to cut into substantial portion of the question allowance, but I believed it would be worth the price.

Thinking like that, I sought her advice.

“Personally, I recommend the God of Adventure. Since you are in a unique situation where you get to be alone often, I know the God of Slowness would be also a good fit for you, but honestly, being an apostle for God of Slowness is not something an ordinary human should do.”

Her opinion on the God of Slowness was unexpectedly terrible.

However, excluding her comment on God of Slowness' apostle being too tough to handle for an ordinary human being, it seemed like she was saying the God of Slowness would fit me well given my circumstance.

Since she recommended the God of Adventure, it also meant the God of Adventure was also not a bad choice.

‘All right, I made the decision.’

[God of Adventure is feeling anxious.]

‘Why are you feeling anxious again, old man?

Ah, that makes sense. I can see why he would be.

He had done many silly things so far.’

“Well then, I am choosing both of them.”

‘Since I need to choose one side eventually and become that god’s apostle, I should make the choice after gathering a lot more information later.

The tests will become harder, but it is not a bad thing.

I could grow more from going through more difficult trials.’

[God of Slowness is disappointed.]

[God of Adventure is relieved.]

It seemed both the God of Slowness and God of Adventure thought I would choose the God of Slowness.

Still, I now had one less of big concerns.

It was a huge thing I had been agonizing on ever since I cleared the Sixth Floor.

[God of Adventure would like to gift you, the one who is about to start the test, with a god's power.]

[God of Slowness would like to gift you, the one who is about to start the test, with a god's power.]

‘All right. This is great.

I thought they might give me something, so I was getting my hopes up.

They are each giving me a power skill. This makes choosing both of them the obvious right answer.

Currently, I have two god power skills, the Blink and Talaria's

Wings.

From balance stand point, they can be called over powered cheat-like skills.

I wonder what kind of power skills I'll be getting this time?

Let's check.'

“Status Window.”

[Lee Ho-jae (Human)]

Lv. 24

Strength: 31

Dexterity: 44

Vitality: 37

Mana: 35

Skill:

Battle Focus Lv.19

Willpower Lv.10

Awakening Lv.2

Night Vision Lv.5

Bright Vision Lv.5

Charge Lv.8

Sneak Lv.8

Meditation Lv.8

Natural Regeneration Lv.8

Super Regeneration Lv.5

Strengthened Senses Lv.12

Widened Senses Lv.5

Increased Field of Vision Lv.4

Ironwall Lv.2

Toughened Skin Lv.3

Mid-level Swordsmanship Lv.3

Mid-level Shield Skill Lv.1

Mid-level Hand to Hand Combat Skill Lv.1

Basic Throwing Skill Lv.4

Mana Circuit Lv.10

Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv.5

Familiarity with Spirits Lv.2

Knowledge of the Time before Babel Lv.5

Soul Steal Lv.5

Mind Corruption Immunity Lv.2

Great Pain Resistance Lv.2

Bleed Resistance Lv.10

Faint Resistance Lv.6

Pierce Resistance Lv.4

Great Poison Resistance Lv.2

Paralysis Resistance Lv.14

Heat Resistance Lv.6

Burn Resistance Lv.10

Cold Resistance Lv.4

Frostbite Resistance Lv.3

Perseverance Lv.1

Composition Lv.1

Blink Emblem Lv.Max

Talaria's Wings Lv.Max,

Dead Summoning Lv.???

Misc: God of Slowness is disappointed. God of Adventure is relieved.

God of Slowness' test [Completion rate: 2/11]

The details about the tests were added to the status window.

‘It looks like the tests are already completed quite a bit?’

It realized it was a wise decision to postpone on the decision.

It seemed my past actions were taken into account in the test completion.

‘By the way... Why is there so many things in the God of Adventure's test?’

It isn't just a little different.

It was 20 times more than the test by the God of Slowness.

Before I even realized, I already completed 30 of them, which is a lot, but there are way too many things in the God of Adventure's test.

Well then, should I check the skills?’

[Perseverance (Lv.1)]

Description: It is a gift from the God of Adventure.

This power will give you strength when you are facing difficult adversities, especially during the most trying times.

[Focused Effort (Lv.1)]

Description: It is a gift from the God of Slowness.

It will lead you to greater result when you pursue something with stronger desire for longer.

The one negative thing about the power skills was that they were all lacking in explanations. I could ask Kiri Kiri to explain more, but the amount of information allowance spent on skill descriptions was significant. It was no joke.

‘Let’s just try to make a guess.

Perseverance seems like it is similar to the Iron Wall. Iron Wall is a passive skill that hardens my body. Perhaps the skill Perseverance strengthens my mind?

It could be a skill that supports my combat abilities.

It could also be a simple skill that hardens my body.

As for the Focused Effort, it might be for improving the efficiency of skill growth when I focus on one movement or skill for a long time to master it.

Like in video games where a boost increases level up or stat speed by two folds...

Something like that.

Maybe it is a skill that allows me to obtain hidden skills or extra attributes.

After the Round ends, I'd be trapped inside the waiting room for three days without being able to leave.

It looks like I'll be able to see great efficiency in training if I pick a skill and grow just that one while I stay there.

It might be able to affect skills such as swordsmanship or other combat skills during battle.

Although I am not certain right now, it looks like they are both good skills.

I'll have to look in to details later, but I don't think they will be far off from my guesses.

It's just that the Focused Effort skill's effect is... Since it is related to growth rate, it would have been better if I had it sooner.

If I knew this, I would have accepted the tests as soon as I cleared the Sixth Floor.

It feels like the disappointment from missing the double experience points event at a PC room.

... Um... This does make me feel bitter.

Actually, it is beyond bitter. It is aching.

I did end up with losses because I acquired the skill late, but it is not serious.

After the Sixth Floor, I went through all floors quickly except the 11th Floor.

If I got the skill before the Sixth Floor, then it would have had a great effect on my growth results, but since it would have been for after the Sixth Floor, it would have made little difference to what I gained after the Sixth Floor.

Actually, it would have made some differences, but I am okay

with not having gained them.

... I'm just justifying the situation.

I know this.

It is a serious loss.

Still, I need to keep my mind positive, shouldn't I?

The reality is that I am in the Hell Difficulty.'

I looked at Kiri Kiri who was again focused on the dish that had the mousse cake.

"Aaaang! L... Let me eat it! Don't take away what I had been eating!"

'It's probably going too far to take away something she was eating.'

I gave the dish back to her. Instead, I picked up the only macaroon placed on top of the cake.

"Aaaaang! Aaaaah! I was saving that!"

'Hey, I'm the one who bought this.'

*

Kiri Kiri cried out a river because the macaroon was taken away from her. It didn't take long to calm her down.

Actually, I tried to console her, but I gave up right away due to laziness. Instead, I just bought her a macaroon set.

“Hehe. You are so kind, Hojae.”

‘Of course I’m nice.

I’m also great looking, right?’

“Yep! You are so cool, Hojae.”

‘Of course. Of course.

I always get this impression from her, but this lass acts like she would hand over her very own soul if I buy her the right foods at the right time.

Kiri Kiri, you shouldn't go with some stranger who buys you candy.’

“Why?”

“That guy will try to give you something other than candy.”

“If not candy, what is he going to give me?”

“... Well, anyway. Not something you should eat. Well, actually, is it something you can eat?”

“In that case, can I go with him?”

“No.”

“Why?”

‘How am I supposed to explain this?’

[Lee Ho-jae, 11th Floor: Hey. What do you think is the reason why kids shouldn't follow strangers offering them candy?]

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: ... What the hell is this about now? I'm busy at the moment. If you are going to ask me weird things out of the blue like this, I'm going to ignore you.]

Chapter 58 - Tutorial 12th Floor (1)

“Make it so I can see additional explanation while I’m at the waiting room.”

“Okaying~.”

With this, I guess that is enough for the power skills.

As for the rest, I can check their performances in detail when I’m at the waiting room and organize my thoughts again.

One thing I am disappointed about is that the skills are not at Max levels.

Perseverance and Focused Effort are both at Level 1.

I should not expect them to be as high performance as the Blink and Talaria’s Wings that I got with the levels already at the Maximum.

There is potential for growth in the skills, so maybe they might show just as good or greater effectiveness later, but...

Um... Well then...

“Kiri Kiri. Do I still have allowances left?”

I had been saving my allowances since the Sixth Floor. I rarely used them.

I did just get huge amount of information about the gods and being an apostle, but still, I think I have some left to spare.

“A little.”

A little you say... They were expensive as fuck.

“In that case, do you have any advice for me for the 12th Floor?”

“No. Howjae... It would be a little convenient for you if I gave you advices, but the result will be the same. I recommend that you just don't hear the advice this time. You will be able to get through the floor with ease.”

That's probably the case.

Ever since I cleared the Sixth Floor, I never felt the floors afterwards were as difficult as the Sixth Floor.

I cleared the Six Floor which required five people in a party.

It means I have the strength of five challengers at that floor in the Hell Difficulty.

Actually, if I think about the strength and the roles, my strength is greater than that.

There were more stages since the Sixth Floor that required party plays.

However, ever since I overcame the wall of five people's worth, I was able to clear them with ease.

It will work out the same this time.

It might get a little tough if they throw a raid stage that requires 25 people or more, but...

That didn't happen yet.

I purchased food, potions and other simple expendable items and got up.

Looks like I finished everything I need to do.

In particular, I feel refreshed now that I organized the things related to the tests for the apostle.

I had been postponing it for too long, thinking I should decide after getting information first.

“Well then, I’ll see you next time.”

I waved at Kiri Kiri and headed to the portal.

“Bye! You mustn’t cry when you get lonely!”

... I am not going to cry.

Just wait until I see you again next time.

I got on the portal as I planned petty revenge that involved cakes.

“Good luck!”

Still, looking at Kiri Kiri hopping at the spot and waving at me, I also waved back at her.

It feels great to have someone who always greets me and sees me off with bright attitude.

It is to the point that makes me wonder if I would have lived my life a little differently in my past if I had someone like her.

[You have entered the waiting room at the 12th Floor.]

This time, beyond just being big, it is a ginormous stone room.

It was unexpectedly big. I looked around the space and promptly opened the status window.

It is time for me to check my power skills performances in detail.

It feels like scratching an instant lottery.

My heart is pounding.

[Perseverance (Lv.1)]

Description: It is a gift from the God of Adventure.

This power will give you strength when you are facing difficult adversities, especially during the most trying times.

Your combat abilities will increase by a small margin in proportion to the enemies' number and strength.

Your combat abilities will increase by a small margin in proportion to the number of comrades you have standing behind you.

Your combat abilities will increase by a small margin in proportion to your exhaustion and wounds.

The effects can overlap with multiple situations happening simultaneously.

Additional attributes: A certain amount of resistance will be given to you against mental magic attacks and stress.

It is the best.

There isn't anything I would throw away among the skill's effects.

There are three situations where my combat abilities will increase.

Moreover, if all three situations applies, I can receive all three boosts at the same time.

Although I still don't know by how much the effects are when it said in the description that the increase will be by a small margin.

I cannot always have comrades, but I can always satisfy the other two conditions.

This is Hell Difficulty after all.

It is not hard to use at all too.

Actually, using it is too easy.

It is a combat type passive skill with applicability that is very wide and top notch.

Growing this skill is probably not very hard either.

I also like that the increase will be in proportion to danger.

It will be great to have everyday, but it will be like a ray of light in the darkness when I'm in a serious pinch.

Moreover, it is giving me resistances to mental attacks.

Since I have the Mental Corruption Immunity Skill and this Perseverance Skill on top of that, I think it will be all right for me to ease my worries on mental attacks.

Although I am not getting a feel for the resistance against stress.

[The God of Adventure is looking at you. He is excited with anticipations.]

Excited with anticipations, what a load of...

Kum. Uuuuhm.

... Wow, God of Adventure is the best.

[God of Adventure is proud.]

Had I only been complaining and making fun of the God of Adventure? You are even saying you feel proud now?

Now, let's check the Focused Effort Skill.

[Focused Effort (Lv.1)]

Description: It is a gift from the God of Slowness.

It will lead you to greater result when you pursue something with stronger desire for longer.

Mastery growth rate will increase if you focus and work on a particular move for longer than a certain duration.

Additional attributes: Increases focus and mental strength by small margins.

The Focused Effort was not far off from what I thought it was.

The question was how long I needed to maintain the focus for the improved mastery rate.

Also, since it said a particular move, I wondered if it meant I had to refrain from doing anything else.

It probably means I can't occasionally try out mana circulation training while doing swordsmanship training, but what about shield techniques?

Both swordsmanship and shield techniques are under the combat skill classification.

Could they be considered same move?

Also, if all other movements are not allowed, does that include breathing?

That probably is not it.

This skill has a lot that I need to find out from now on.

I should check it out whenever I can while clearing the floor. If it is really confusing, I should just ask Kiri Kiri for more detailed explanation.

All right. That's enough of organizing.

[Round 14, Day Six, 17:10]

Shall I head out?

I have no need to rest in the waiting room.

I had plenty of nap at Kiri Kiri's field. I'm already healed of all wounds, and my exhausted stamina is also replenished.

Let's just go now.

[Would you like to enter?]

Um?

The party setting window is not appearing.

That means... it is a solo stage?

I get why I was teleported without any conditions and Kiri Kiri said I'll be able to clear this without much difficulty.

They were probably omitted because they are not needed.

I think I'll be able to get to higher floors pretty quickly if solo stages continue for a while.

While I'm at this, let's try to catch up to the floors that others are at on other difficulties.

Initially, I was at fairly high floors in comparison to other challengers, but I spent too much time at the Sixth Floor.

In other difficulties, there are numerous rankers who are at the 30th Floor, which is called the residential area, and the floors above.

Of course, the stages at the Hell Difficulty are different, but I don't like that I am behind on floor numbers.

I should go up faster.

I want to check out the residential area too.

“Let’s go.”

*

Through the portal, I got to a bonfire room. I activated another portal inside the bonfire room, and I was standing at a lush jungle at an instant.

The landscape is something I had not experienced before.

It is probably better than deserts or ice lands.

It is a little, no... seriously hot and humid, but I can definitely endure this.

Still, if I didn’t have the heat resistance, I think I would have been in for a lot of pain.

What’s the clearing goal?

[You have entered the 12th Floor’s trial.]

Description: Welcome to the Ihaoi Continent, the place that is well known to be the home world of Ihaoi race.

Ihaoi Continent’s environment is full of danger to the point

that it is understandable why even the original residents abandoned their home world and left.

It is a savage world without any civilization. However, the continent is a prized tourist destination famous for extremely low chance of survival and ferocious predators.

Of course, there are not many challengers who came to test their strength at the Ihaoi's jungle and left the place alive.

Young challenger who just became an adult and wishes to prove your abilities, the value you should possess in this continent is not bravery but cautiousness.

There will always be countless predators that will attempt to take your life. Survive the jungle for 25 days and prove that you are a fully matured adult and a warrior.

[Condition of Success]

1. Survive for 25 days.

It is such a clear cut explanation.

Survive.

[Your inventory window is becoming inactive.]

My inventory window is becoming inactive?

“Inventory.”

There really is no response.

I looked at my two hands while feeling hopeless.

I didn't even get to take a shield or sword.

In my pocket... It is empty.

There is nothing there.

Hahahaha. I feel like cursing someone.

Who should I curse?

... I should curse myself.

I let my guard down and entered this place without proper armaments.

I should reflect on this to never let it happen again in the future.
Let's hold out and think of this as a punishment.

I looked at the clear condition again.

Survive for 25 days huh...

By any chance... I need to be here for 25 days no matter what?
That is not the case, right?

Right?

Uh? That isn't the case, right?

*

"Kiri Kiri!! You should have told me about this!"

I am done for.

There is no condition for failure.

Moreover, there is no return portal.

I looked everywhere over and over, but I don't see any portal.

In other words, unless I die, I need to stay in this jungle for 25 days no matter what.

However, now is...

[Round 14, Day 6, 17:15]

Considering the time, I cannot stay here for 25 days.

There is only 24 days before the round ends.

In other words, I need to stay trapped here for the next 24 days, and then I'll get teleported to the waiting room.

After that, during the next round, I need to survive 25 days from the beginning to clear this place.

I have never seen a stage so shitty like this.

If I cleared the 11th Floor just a day sooner, just a day... This foul luck would have been avoided.

Uuuuaaaaa. Fuck.

Ugh. Let's get this straight.

What should I do from now on?

I need to try to be content while living in poverty for the next 24 days.

I need to make a place to stay.

I need to make complete safety as my uttermost priority and procure food.

It is like being on a vacation at a South American jungle. Holla!

Still, making a camp and procuring food won't be easy.

This is the 12th Floor at the Hell Difficulty.

Just like how wild animals declare their territories, should I select a territory and let that be known to the natives of this jungle?

Um... Since I still don't know what kind of enemies I'll be meeting, I am not sure yet.

They could be similar to humans or they could be wild animals evolved closer to monsters.

They could be something else completely unexpected.

Let's think about this later.

One remaining method is clearing the 12th Floor in 24 days and getting outside.

Through the conquest clear.

The clear condition is 25 days of survival.

In that case, what if I eradicate all things that are threat to my life?

For now, I should explore this place and get a feel for the difficulty. If I see a possibility for success, then I should aim for the conquest clear.

[Kiaaaaaaa~]

An unpleasant high pitch roar was heard from somewhere.

Also, a giant shadow darkened the area.

When I turned around, what came into my field of view was a house sized... No... It was a building sized dinosaur.

A dinosaur that looks like that... What was it called?

I saw one in a picture book when I was a kid.

Brachiosaurs?

At that moment, there was another dinosaur of similar size that was charging at the one that I thought might be a Brachiosaurs.

Of the two dinosaurs fighting over there, none of them is an herbivore.

They are both carnivores.

It looked like they had been chewing on meat jerkies ever since they were hatched.

Along with loud roars, claws that were just as gigantic were swung, and soon incredible amount of blood was spread to the air.

It looks like water coming out of firetruck's hose.

I think I could make a swimming pool if I collected all that blood on a crater.

[Kwaaaaaa!]

A roar exploded out again, and this time, red flame started to linger around a dinosaur's mouth.

With that, the dinosaur was...

What the, what is that? By any chance, is that it?

It is not the time to just sit here and watch.

For now, it's time to bounce.

The amount of mana being focused at that dinosaur's mouth is no joke.

I'm far away from it, but even I can feel it.

That is extremely dangerous.

Kwaaaaang~

While I was running, I could hear colliding sound from my back, and the ground shook.

I slowly looked back to see. It seemed like it was a shockwave from the fire breath from one dinosaur colliding with the barrier of the other dinosaur, the one that I thought was a brachiosaurs.

It was the real fire breath!

Seriously, why the fuck is there a dragon on the 12th Floor?

I need to run.

Dinosaur blood was raining down from the sky like heavy summer rain. I ran through the bushes to avoid the blood rain. I diligently rolled my brain while running.

What should I do?

I don't even have any information. Aiming for the conquest clear at a Jurassic Park with berserk dragons running around is not a sane decision.

I need information.

Chapter 59 - Tutorial 12th Floor (2)

It took a while for me to get away from the scene of two fake dragons running wild.

Because their bodies were so huge, no matter how far I got from them, I could still see them clearly as if I was right next to them.

I was able to get away from the scene of violent battle after running for a long while through the bushes.

When I thought that I was finally and definitely out of danger, I sat while leaning on a tree.

“Ugh.”

What should I do now?

This really feels hopeless.

I wouldn't be feeling this way if I could just open the inventory. No, if I had the basic sword and shield at least, I wouldn't feel so hopeless right now.

First, since I can't bring out food or water, I need to worry about food.

This place is a lush jungle.

Since there are grasses and trees everywhere, I think I'll be able to find edible fruits or vegetables.

However, if I carelessly pick and eat fruits out of hunger and get poisoned, that would be a serious trouble.

I don't know when or where unexpected danger might come at me. If I get poisoned by chance, I cannot even bring out antidote potion.

Since the situation came to this, it was really fortunate that I got the Great Poison Resistance Skill after clearing the 11th Floor.

I should gather fruits when I see them. After securing minimum safety, I should eat them only when I feel like I'm dying from hunger.

The food that seems the safest to eat are meat...

If I could find raw meat and roast it on fire to eat, I probably won't need to worry about poison.

Poisonous animals usually have the venom gland at the mouth, so I just need to cut off their heads instead of going through the difficult process of eliminating poison from the meat.

It is not perfect, but I think that should be enough as the bare

minimum safety against the poison.

I am not going to do further measures against poison since I don't know anything else.

Thinking about procuring food made me think about the two fake dragons that I ran into earlier.

They had humongous bodies.

If I can get even just a part of their meat, I probably won't have to worry about food for a while.

The fight is probably over by now?

Um...

No. Let's not get distracted by the thought.

Even if one of them is dead, the other one must be still there.

If I approach it carelessly, and if it attacks me because I am bothering it while it is eating, that would be a big trouble for me.

Also, there are probably other scavengers who are thinking the same thing I am.

Would I be the only one who is interested in that giant dinosaur's dead body?

Probably not all of the living beings in this jungle are as big as those dinosaurs.

There probably are ones that are a lot smaller.

Maybe there are also ones as small as me.

To me, the smaller-sized enemies could be more dangerous than the giant ones.

Enemies like that are going to be hanging around the dead body. I shouldn't even try to put myself in danger by butting in there.

Actually, I should get further away before such bastards show up.

Let's move again.

*

Having walked inside this tightly packed jungle for so long, and then for a little longer again, the sense of alertness I had initially had become dull. Instead, all I was left with was frustration.

It's hot. Also, it's too humid.

The grass that's sticking to my skin... The grass that's blocking my field of view... I hate them all.

I hate the bugs flying around near me even more.

Fuck.

After entering the 12th Floor, what I have seen so far are the two dinosaurs, ridiculous amount of trees, grass, and bugs. Those are all.

This environment is provoking extreme discomfort.

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: Big Bro, are you busy right now?]

It is a message.

... Since a message came, I might as well rest for a bit.

I'm pretty far from the starting point. Also, let alone any danger, I don't see any organisms besides bugs around me.

[Lee Ho-jae, 12th Floor: No, not yet. I'll get busy soon.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: You are at 12th Floor. How is it?]

I thought hard about how to tell him and then decided to just be honest.

Afterall, Lee Hyun-jin is also in Hell Difficulty.

[Lee Ho-jae, 12th Floor: It is a real bitch. The Inventory Window is closed.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: Inventory Window is?]

I explained my situation in detail to satisfy his curiosity.

Lee Hyung-jin didn't send any response for a while.

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: ... I think I shouldn't get that far, Big Bro. Actually, I guess it is just that I cannot get that far.]

Um...

Actually, I was expecting a response like 'As I thought, the difficulty is insane. Keep working hard, Big Bro.' Because of that, I explained with exaggeration. However...

Lee Hyung-jin was also a challenger in the Hell Difficulty. It seemed I took this fact too lightly.

It looks like this kid's mental game is about to develop a crack.

Let's divert the topic.

[Lee Ho-jae, 12th Floor: How are the newbies?]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: They are doing okay. They seem frustrated because they are not able to get past the First Floor, but what could they do. If they carelessly rush the stage, they will die.]

This guy is not usually gloomy like this. Usually, he has a bright personality. He laughs even at the smallest things.

[Lee Ho-jae, 12th Floor: What about you?]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: I am thinking about postponing challenging the Third Floor boss room until the next round. Unlike you, it will be hard for me to not fall on the cloud bridge. Also, I don't have any information about what's below it, so I don't want to challenge it when I don't feel comfortable.]

Could it be that he lost confidence when he gave up the Third Floor boss room?

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: For now, I am going to wait until I grow strong enough to have the confidence in getting through the floor.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 12th Floor: All right. That's safe. Well then, keep up

the good work.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: Okay, Big Bro.]

Lee Hyung-jin had bubbly personality when it came to dealing with people. However, when it came to the stages, he was very calm and safety-oriented.

His play style was very meticulous and calm.

He thinks about a lot of things and makes the move after checking them.

To base it off of video games, I guess I could explain him as a thief or assassin class.

He was still at the Third Floor, so he had not had a real combat yet, but his tendency was like that.

He was the first challenger besides myself that got past the Second Floor in the Hell Difficulty, so that proved his abilities.

I asked why he entered the Hell Difficulty when he is so careful like that. He also said he was drunk at the moment and selected the Hell Difficulty out of whim under influence of the alcohol.

As I thought, alcohol is the cause of all evil and wrong.

Still, because he has a warm personality, he likes talking to people. Other people also likes talking to him.

Also, because he is very thorough and careful, he is taking care of all lower floor challengers, who were all at the First Floor, giving them advices and counsel.

Most of the advices he is giving are coming from me, but it is far better for them to come through Lee Hyung-jin than from me directly.

People are more comfortable with that, and Lee Hyung-jin is good at leveling the eyes with others when explaining things to them.

When it comes to psychological counseling, he is far better than me.

He is a friend I am thinking highly of in many ways.

He is a few years younger than me, but there are a lot I could learn from him as well.

Seeing a guy like that getting depressed is bugging me.

Now that I think about it, I've heard that there is going to be the day of the great harmony at the end of this round.

I should meet Lee Hyung-jin and talk to him for a bit.

If possible, I should ask Kim Min-huk to join us in the conversation.

Honestly, I am not confident at all about making someone feel better through a conversation.

With Kim Min-huk tagging along, he should be able to console Lee Hyung-jin by himself.

I realized Kim Min-huk was busy lately. Although the thought zapped through my mind, I ignored it.

Now, let's focus on my own situation.

First, I need to find a place that could be used as my camp.

Since the clear condition is surviving here for a long time, I desperately need a camp site where I could rest and be safe.

I should gradually expand my territory with my camp as the main site.

The camp site candidates I can think of right now are...

Next to the river.

Cave.

Above a giant tree.

Are they all?

The area near the river has high likelihood of already being the predators' territories. As for a cave, it would be hard to find.

That leaves above a giant tree as a camp site.

I should look for a tree that is significantly bigger and taller than others, one that's big enough for me to make a tent above it and reside.

How do I find it?

... Do I need to walk around aimlessly until I find it?

Through this jungle?

If possible, I wish I could look around the area.

My field of view is too limited because of tightly packed trees growing everywhere.

The stage.... No, even if it is just the landscape nearby, I would like to confirm it with my own eyes.

To see my current position and the landscape around me, the easiest thing I can do is just flying up.

However, if I do, I'll be exposed in midair.

If there are enemies who include the sky as the attack range, I'll be attacked right away.

When I was concerned about my visual range, I could hear steps nearby.

It was a really, really quiet sound.

However, it was not the kind made by small bugs causing the leaves to swing.

They were footsteps.

They were sounds of intentionally cautious and quiet steps.

The feline predators at the Eighth Floor had this kind of footstep sounds.

I kept my pose steady and moved only my eyes to look around.

There is nothing.

I looked around at the direction where the footstep sounds came from, but I don't see the cause.

Did I get the wrong direction?

No.

Although I am at the jungle with the sounds of leaves waving in the air and chirping of birds and bugs chaotically mixed in, there is no way my senses could be wrong.

The footstep sounds definitely came from my left.

[Battle Focus]

That means I just cannot see the opponent.

Everything was slowed down because of the Battle Focus. In that slowed down world, I patiently waited until the opponent showed up.

This is the first time for me to fight an assassin type.

Against an assassin, it's probably the surprise attack that I should

be cautious about.

However, if I know where it is before it happens, I will be the one who will deal the surprise attack.

There it is.

With the invisible enemy coming closer, I can feel its presence more clearly.

The sounds of quiet footsteps are coming toward me too.

Little by little...

I used the Mana Circuit to circulate the mana inside my body and focused a part of it on my left hand.

I swung my hand to the left side as soon as I became certain the invisible enemy was within my range.

The mana was focused on the tip of my hand like a sharp edge. I felt something was cut with it.

Slice...

[Kiiiiiaaaaak!]

“Now I can see you. Hello?”

The enemy in front of me was a monster that resembled the appearance of a long armed orangutan.

I thought this environment was like the Jurassic period, but this place even has mammals.

I called that bastard a monster instead of just orangutan because it had gigantic scythes below its shoulders instead of arms.

They were like arms of a mantis.

Also, its mouth was a playful mix of a bird's beak and sabretooth's dental structure.

For the sake of convenience, let's just call it an orangutan monster.

The orangutan monster was bleeding around its neck.

As I thought, my attack was dealt correctly.

I felt a little bit of satisfaction from having confirmed that.

It seemed the orangutan monster panicked from realizing it could understand my words. Perhaps it panicked because I

attacked it when it knew it was invisible. Although I could not be certain why, it was hesitating to do anything.

“I’m so glad I met you. I wish we could chat for a while. I have a lot of things I would like to hear, you see?”

[Ki.... Kiiiiaaaaack! Kiiiack!]

“Why are you acting like you cannot understand me. I know you can understand me just fine.”

The knowledge before the time of Babel was merciless.

Nobody can escape its effect, not the one possesses the skill nor the opponent in the front.

[Kuuurururu... Kuruooooaaaaa.]

Anyway, this bastard is too incorporative.

It seems there are plants that mesmerize other animals and eat them.

Is it like the ultimate evolution version of the venus fly trap?

“Why don’t you calm down a little instead? If the conversation goes well, I might let you live, you get it?”

[Kuuuuooooooooaaa!]

I don't think this will work. Hostility is only deepening after each time I try to talk to him.

It cannot be helped.

They said the best medicine for those that don't understand words is a good beating.

Let's try talking to it a bit later.

I took a step in, and the orangutan monster charged in after another beastly roar.

It has invisibility cloaking, which is a cheat-like ability. However, its abilities are so-so besides that one thing.

Although it is completely visible now, it is just charging at me without any plan. I don't feel so threatened by it.

It does have many violent looking things attached to it, but it is only on par with ordinary wild animals.

I blocked the swung scythe with the hand covered in mana. I swung my other hand and cut its shoulder.

The mana-covered hand could be shield or sword.

Of course, mana-covered shield and sword are far more powerful.

The difference in reach is substantial, and they are safer too.

The orangutan monster screamed in pain. I kicked its lower body to knock it over. I stepped on its chest so it could not move.

However, even in that state, the monster continued to struggle and resist.

To stop the scythe being swung at me, I cut off its other shoulder. Also, to stop it from struggling, I struck its stomach a few times.

Finally, the monster stopped for a moment.

I think I can finally interrogate it.

“Does it hurt? See? Wouldn’t it have been better if you acted like a gentleman from the beginning? If you answer my questions from now on, I will...”

Ah... I don’t have any potions.

In that case, I think this bastard is going to die before long.

I was going to ask the monster before it stopped breathing so I could get some information even if it was going to be only a little bit. However, the monster opened its mouth first.

And then...

[Kiiiiiaaaaaak! Kuuuuuuaaaaaak!]

It roared loudly.

This is not good.

It spoke a simple language of wild beasts, so the meaning was not as detailed as beings of higher intelligence.

However, the beastly roar that it just screamed had one clear meaning.

Revenge.

[Kiiiiiaaaaaak!]

[Kiiiiiaaaaaaaaak!]

I can hear similar kinds of roars from the distance.

They are not coming from just a few.

Ones I can hear are in order of several dozens.

I turned my head and looked at the monster crushed below me.

The monster already had stopped breathing. It was dead.

The situation is getting twisted in a really annoying way.

I thought about things as I listened violent sounds of footsteps from the distance.

I don't know the enemies' strength.

I don't know their number either.

I don't know the situation in this place either.

I don't know the landscape.

I'm at a disadvantage on everything.

I should run for now.

Chapter 60 - Tutorial 12th Floor (3)

Ugh... Fuck.

I knew this would happen.

This god damn Hell Difficulty never lets me off easy.

I didn't stop moving while I complained inside.

[Kiiiiiaaaaak!]

Why do I have to suffer this trouble because of those crazy orangutan bastards?

Running through the jungle with tightly packed woods was harder than I thought.

The ground is bumpy and slippery. Also, it is easy to get tripped over the tree roots. The view is completely covered by the leaves. Viewing anything beyond 10 meters was difficult.

I wish I could just fight them for a while and end this vicious cycle.

Unfortunately, the orangutans did not agree.

After killing the orangutan that I met first, I killed the other orangutans that came running after hearing that one's roar.

These monsters also roared before dying, and other orangutan monsters appeared.

This cycle repeated over and over.

The problem was that, having confirmed the difference in strengths, these pricks didn't even rush at me anymore.

Keeping their distance, they screamed from the distance to annoy me. When it looked like I was letting go of my focus even just a little bit, one or two of them attempted surprise attacks as if they were suicide squads.

They scattered and ran away when I approached them.

Do these assholes not even have basic survival instincts?

The orangutan monsters gladly tossed their lives away for the sake of disrupting my focus and interfering with my resting.

Like that, the frustrating standoff continued for almost a day, and I had no choice but to escape the place.

If they are extremely weak, I could just beat them to death one by one, but they are not that weak.

Every one of the orangutan monsters have the minimum combat abilities becoming of the residents of 12th Floor of the Hell Difficulty.

They have gigantic scythes on their shoulders, and they are very quick.

Also, they are very intelligent.

They are cornering me and chasing me like how hunters hunt wild animals.

Even when I put distance between us using Talaria's Wings and Blink, somehow, they get right on my tail again.

I was flying low for a very short duration, trying not to draw attention from other monsters in the jungle. Because of this, I was not able to lose the orangutan monsters.

Even so, I don't want to encounter new dangers by flying high for a long time.

Compared to the two dinosaurs I ran into when I first entered the 12th Floor, the orangutans are not much of threat.

It is just that there are many of them, and they are clever.

The orangutans already set up a wide perimeter to surround me. They are moving the perimeter along with my movements so I cannot escape the formation.

Damn it. I would feel better if they just swarmed at me in hundreds right now.

Is it going to take acting like I collapsed after being wounded for these bastards to let their guard down and attack me?

Ah, there is one more.

The reason why it is so difficult to deal with these orangutans.

Each of these bastards have unique skills.

It seemed this was not something special to the orangutan monsters. It seemed this was the special characteristic of this jungle.

The two giant dinosaurs I met earlier used barrier and fire breath.

It was so out of the blue.

They were in middle of physical struggle, but all of the sudden, they used magic based techniques.

It does not make sense.

No matter how I think about them, they are skills.

Just like how I obtained them and used them in the Tutorial, these guys each have a skill.

The first orangutan had invisibility skill. The second one used physical strengthening type skill and wind type magic attack.

I don't know which bastard is going to shoot which kind of attack. This is getting really complicated.

Damn it. Only if the environment was something that I am more used to...

No... Only if the surrounding was more open...

[Kiiaaaaaaooo!]

An orangutan that was hiding in the bushes jumped out to the front of me. It seemed it was hiding and waiting along my route that I was taking in attempt to run away.

I knew all along that you guys were hiding in there.

Puuk.

Along with that sound, my right hand pierced the monster's chest.

After that, I kicked the other orangutan monster that came at me after a delay.

[Kiiiiiaaak!]

The one that I kicked rolled on the ground. When its scythes touched the ground, the dirt became stained in black along with sparking sound.

... What is that. Electricity?

Are you Pikachu?

The orangutan monster was trying to get up quickly. I started to run again after sending its head off flying with the edge of my hand.

Gosh... you annoying pricks.

I think I killed over a hundred of them. Just how many are there?

Because they are only continuing to bother me in small groups of two or three, I cannot determine exactly how many there are.

While running, I looked at a large cliff that could be seen through the gaps between the tree branches above.

I just need to get there.

When I get there, I should go up using Blink and Talaria's Wings.

Those insane orangutans do not have hands.

They have scythes instead of arms.

They probably can't chase me by climbing the cliff.

Even if they do get to the top of the cliff by going round and round the cliff for a long time, I would be somewhere else by then.

The problem is how long it will take me to get to that cliff. It seems pretty far.

Half a day... or a day even if it takes long?

*

I looked at the orangutan monster in the distance that was glaring at me and clicked my tongue.

Wow... This is just too much.

Even though I don't want to swear, I cannot help myself but to do it.

These sons of bitches.

Haven't you guys had enough?

These guys don't know when to quit.

These complete morons' guerrilla tactic is continuing for two days.

I thought I'll get to the cliff soon, but I don't feel like I'm getting any closer although I had been going in the direction.

The cliff was huge. The jungle was vast, extending to the end of the horizon. Also, my field of view was blocked by lush forest. Because of them all making things worse together, I could not measure the distance to the cliff accurately.

Now, I am really getting closer to the cliff, but I'm slowly losing faith in my sense of distance.

I have not had anything to eat or drink in the past two days.

Of course, I didn't get to sleep either.

Actually, resting was not the problem. I didn't even have time to poop.

“Hey, you moron bastards! Are you assholes going to take responsibility if I crap in my pants?”

Of course they won't. You irresponsible bastards.

I used Soul Cry Skill and shouted that, but it is not doing anything.

Ever since I killed all orangutans near me by provoking them to come out using the Soul Cry Skill, they are lurking around just beyond the range of the skill.

Of course, the suicide squads ambush continued periodically.

Just how intelligent are these guys?

The sophistication of the perimeter that the orangutans formed is no joke.

I feel like I'm getting an indirect experience for what it feels like to be inside the thousand-mile formation described in Murim warrior fictions.

There are traps and ambushes here and there along my path.

The interval of their ambushes is incredibly annoying.

There are others glaring or screaming at me from the distance to add to the frustration.

Those are not all.

I tried multiple times to escape the formation using the wind spirit and suddenly changing the direction. However, I failed every time.

It seems they formed the perimeter in a complete circle.

On top of that, it is layered after layer.

I think there are at least four layers.

Is this even possible?

When we are in a jungle where I can barely even see past 10 meters?

How could such a large number of monsters make such accurate movement in a place like this?

This is impossible unless there is a control tower where the locations of all orangutans and my location could be observed along with the full open view of the surrounding terrain to carry out tactical level plans.

It is to the point of making me wonder if these bastards actually have incredible science and have artificial satellites and radio communications.

Is it a skill?

It is plausible.

These bastards each have a special skill.

They were mostly the kind that were directly useful during combat. However, just like the invisibility skill that the first orangutan had, they each had all sorts of extraordinary skills.

If some of them had skills that allowed one to see the terrain from the sky and enabled mass communication to all orangutans in the jungle...

Also, if they have a commander that can lead them using those skills...

It is a plausible explanation.

Also, it is a plausible explanation that is not solving anything for me.

I thought about it as I dodged the ambush by orangutans jumping down from the tree branches above and smashed their heads to the floor.

If my theory is true, then I don't think I can escape this formation.

Let's organize the choices I have.

Find the enemy's control tower and kill their commander.

Use the Talaria's Wings and run using high altitude flight.

Go over the cliff.

The first choice is impossible.

The second choice is too dangerous.

Considering the range of these bastards' formation, I'll probably have to fly for quite some time before I can escape it.

Also, if I tried it just to escape these annoying orangutans and end up encountering one of those bogus dragons, that will just

make the problem bigger.

In the end, that leaves the third choice, going over the cliff.

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: Hey. Are you busy?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 12th Floor: Yes. I am. What is it?]

I threw a rock at an orangutan that was lying low under the bushes as I replied.

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: I got a weird info. It is not urgent, so I'll talk to you later.]

What was that for? You are leaving me hanging.

I roughly erased the thoughts about the message and focused again in running.

*

Finally!

After running and running, before I realized, the cliff looked closer.

Now, it really feels close.

I haphazardly dodged suicide attacks by the orangutans who were throwing themselves at me. I used Blink several times to move up.

[Talaria's Wings]

I used the Talaria's Wings as soon as I got to be in midair.

The flight effect of the Talaria's Wings was activated. Like that, I started to fly.

Finally, I am free. I am so sick of you bastards!

[Kiaaak. Kiiaaaaak!]

The bastards were screaming at me as they watched me flying up. I sent them a fist potato and focused on flying.

Near the cliff, I flew as I slowly raised the altitude.

There better not be a dinosaur like the one I met on the first day.

As soon as got to the top of the cliff, what I saw was an open field.

Also, there were orangutan monsters. At a glance, it seemed there were over a thousand of them.

What are these guys doing here?

I thought about that as I landed at the edge of the cliff.

A thousand... Two... three thousand...

On top of that, there are ones that are significantly bigger than the orangutan monsters I had seen so far.

Why are they all here?

Although I am thankful that they are all gathered in one place.

I guess I can just leave these guys here and go down the cliff by flying again.

I realized why they were gathered here after the orangutan in the front swung its arm.

[Talaria's Wings is sealed temporarily.]

Oh...

I didn't even think about this being possible.

Having their forces ready at the top of the cliff based on my current heading and sealing my flight ability when I get to the

top...

These guys are super smart.

[Kiiiiaaaaa!]

[Kiiiiaaaak!]

Countless orangutans gathered at the open field roared.

Their roars contained revenge, animosity and belittlement.

Fuckers... Looks like they are excited.

There are about three thousand orangutan monsters, and my flight ability is sealed.

The difference in combat potential is overwhelming.

It is a fight I cannot possibly lose.

“Soul Steal.”

[Soul Steal (Lv.5)]

Description: You produced surprising result that no god in Pantheon thought would be possible. A nameless god who wishes to hide the true identity is gifting you this power.

When you cast it, the enemies within the range will be marked in their souls and slowly drained of their energy.

When you kill the marked enemy, you will absorb its soul which will heal your body.

It is the skill that I obtained after clearing the Sixth Floor which made me go through the worst possible hardship and grinding since I entered the Tutorial.

Since then, the skill allowed me to clear up to the 10th Floor as if I had a free pass through them all.

This skill lowers enemies' strength within the range, and there is the healing effect from defeating them.

Moreover, the enemies lose strength even more over time.

Since then, a group of monsters with so-so strengths was no match for me.

On top of this, now I have a new passive power skill.

[Perseverance (Lv.1)]

Description: It is a gift from the God of Adventure.

This power will give you strength when you are facing difficult adversities, especially during the most trying times.

Your combat abilities will increase by a small margin in proportion to the enemies' number and strength.

Your combat abilities will increase by a small margin in proportion to the number of comrades you have standing behind you.

Your combat abilities will increase by a small margin in proportion to your exhaustion and wounds.

The effects can overlap with multiple situations happening simultaneously.

Additional attributes: A certain amount of resistance will be given to you against mental magic attacks and stress.

A perfect chance for testing the Perseverance Skill's boost effects came.

With the Soul Steal starting to drain strengths from the

monsters, they were starting to panic. I watched them and smiled big.

It's good that you guys read the opponent's mind and set a trap, but...

Taking a chance could lead to danger.

Did you know that the most certain tactic for victory is continuing with the same tactic once you got the upper hand?

“Don't even think about running! Come at me you little bitches!”

I used the Soul Cry as soon as I noticed some of them hesitating and running away.

[Additional Attributes: Enemies who are not as powerful as you cannot ignore your cry and run.]

You cannot run because of the provocation effect of the Soul Cry.

Where do you think you are going?

Since there are many, this will take a while.

However, that's the only downside to this.

I am not worried at all about the outcome of this battle.

I am the expert when it comes to slaughtering a large group of monsters.

[Kiiiiaaak! Kiiak!]

Their beastly roars exploded. Various mid-range skill attacks were launched from them.

[Battle Focus]

Having confirmed the trajectory of their attacks,

[Blink]

I penetrated deep into the group and swung my hand that was covered in mana.

Orangutans' bodies were cut off every time I swung my hand, and blood gushed out.

Every time I harvested each death, the Soul Steal's effect returned them as my energy.

The bloodbath, which started like that, continued until not a single one of them remained standing on the field.

*

I washed the blood off of my face using the drizzling rain.

On the field, there was just me and blood and dead bodies of orangutan monsters.

I think this place will develop horrible stench of blood soon.

Fortunately, there is rain falling right now.

It will wash away the smell of blood a little.

For now, let's get away from this place.

From loads of dead bodies on the ground, I picked up a cut off leg and opened the Talaria's Wings.

The seal on the Talaria's Wings was canceled only after I killed the caster.

I started to glide after jumping off from the cliff, and I landed on a suitable place after gliding for about ten minutes.

Now I am back to where I started.

To point out a few changes, I am pretty tired now, and I'm holding an orangutan's leg.

What should I do now?

I could think of eating, sleeping, finding a camp site and gathering. However, I ignored them all.

I had one thing left that was more important.

I need to poop first

Chapter 61 - Tutorial 12th Floor (4)

It was pouring rain. With almost no strength left, I walked through the forest.

When I just got rid of the pesky orangutan bastards, now it rains.

Would it kill to rain just the right amount... Instead, it had to rain the point where it was difficult to keep my eyes open to see properly.

I have recovered considerable amount of stamina using the Soul Steal. However, I spent more than what I recovered.

It is going to be too much to try move quickly through this rain in current condition.

I think it will take a while to get to the destination.

I worked on the orangutan's leg that I was holding on my hand as I walked slowly.

I was not doing anything special.

I used my hand wrapped in mana to haphazardly cut away its hide, fur and skin. I was trying to slice off the flesh from the bone.

I thought I could do it cleanly like what I saw when I was young

at a fish market where some old lady perfectly lifted just the flesh off of the fish while leaving the bones behind. However, I was mistaken.

The pieces of flesh that were cut from the leg were not even the size of a handful. They were full of bad cuts resulting in loose flesh hanging here and there. Also, they had squashed parts because I was holding them with my hands.

It looked like a clay monster that a young nephew of mine gave me as a present when he came back from kindergarten.

By the way, the clay monster was made with me as the model.

Still, I should eat this.

I washed the flesh in the rain, cut it little bit at a time, put it in my mouth and tried to chew.

It is the worst.

It reeks of fat and fishy smells.

It was slimy yet tough.

Blood came out of the flesh every time I chewed on it, and it was strangely sticky.

I fought the urge to spit out the meat and swallowed it.

Wow... The raw meat of orangutan had the destructive power beyond my wildest imagination.

I attempted eating the raw meat because I had been eating mostly meat jerkies since I entered the Tutorial. However...

This is total failure.

Still, I need to eat this.

I have been moving for the past four days without eating or sleeping.

I cannot afford to complain about the food.

I thought about Kiri Kiri who did not tell me that the inventory window will become inactive.

She said the result will be the same even if she gave me any advice, and she also said I'll be able to get through this stage safely.

However, before saying all that, she also did say that I would have it a little easier if she did give me an advice.

A little? This is not a little!

If I knew I was going to suffer such huge inconvenience, I would have been better off if I received the information.

If you think I'm going to buy you cake next time, just wait and see.

I complained like that by myself and continued to walk.

Unlike how I was when I first arrived at the 12th Floor, I now had a destination to go to. That fact gave my legs some strength at least.

Before I came down from the cliff, I saw a monster moving just below a small hill in the distance.

It was going into a cave to hide when the rain started.

It was far, and it was a small cave hidden amongst the grass. However, I definitely saw the monster going inside the cave.

Thanks to all vision related skills I've acquired in addition to the improved vision, my vision was as strong as rapacious birds.

So, I was certain about what I saw and decided to go there.

After coming down from the cliff, I took care of taking a dump, which was the matter of the uttermost urgency, and I started to

move immediately.

That was until the rain started to pour where I could not move fast anymore.

Ah, of course, I used leaves to wipe myself.

Although this is obvious now, but as for the idea of doing it with orangutan's leg... Um... That never happened.

It was extremely unpleasant to poop while crunching under pouring rain, although the rainfall acted like natural videt, and that could be considered as convenient.

However, actually, I was super concerned the poo might get on the pants because of rain and resulting splashes.

Because my body and clothes all got soaked, it was very uncomfortable and inconvenient.

I suddenly feel nauseated.

The orangutan meat in my mouth right now feels even more disgusting.

Uuugh.

I felt the urge to throw up.

I unconsciously spat out everything in my mouth.

Ugh... Really...

I looked at half chewed up meat on the ground that I was chewing and the meat that was still on my hand.

I really cannot eat this.

A part of me said ‘how could I possibly complain about the type of food when I was at the brink of collapsing out of exhaustion or dying from hunger?’

The other part of me yelled ‘fuck, you call this edible for human consumption?’

The third part of me, who became the judge, raised the arm of the other part of me.

This is not something a human being should eat.

A human being has something to protect before just surviving.

I threw away the orangutan’s leg meat and just continued to walk.

A part of me said how about keeping the meat and roasting it when the rain stops. However, I ignored it.

I did not want to turn back just for that disgusting meat.

If I feel like I would really die from hunger, I'll go peel off the tree barks and eat them.

I collected the rain to wash my mouth which reeked of meat fat and blood smell. Having done that, I felt like I could see things a little clearly.

I think I finally get what the theme is for the 12th Floor's Stage.

Not only do I need to survive, I need to master various survival skills.

The difficulty in combat itself does not seem very high.

The two fake dragons that I ran into when I first entered the stage must be the unusually strong ones.

There were the orangutans, but other monsters I saw while I was being chased by the orangutans were not overwhelmingly strong.

Instead of the combat, this stage requires abilities to resolve the matter of shelter, gathering, hunting, butchery, and cooking and

good decision making.

I really hate this place.

I prefer fights to the death.

*

I finally got there. In the end...

The rainy sky finally started to calm. I looked up the sky and sighed.

It was an incredibly difficult march.

No matter how long I waited, the rain did not stop, so I had to keep on walking through the rain storm.

I am glad I didn't get lost on the way.

If it took longer, it might have gotten dangerous.

My wet hair kept on blocking my view. I brushed it up and looked around.

Front of the cave had a leveled ground. The top of the entrance of the cave was covered in vines. The entrance was also hidden

behind grass.

If I did not see that monster going in here, I would not have noticed this place either.

As I could figure out from how the monster entered the cave when the rain started to fall, the cave was proofed against rain.

The cave was not leading downward. It was shaped such that it was dug upward from the bottom of the small hill, so there was no concern for water coming in.

As long as the water does not leak from the ceiling, this place is perfect.

There is actually a problem.

The cave's owner, no, the cave's old owner does not know how to greet the guest.

“Hey, come out.”

I couldn't sense any presence, so I picked up a rock and threw it into the cave entrance.

There was still no response.

[Soul Cry]

“Come out. This is now my home.”

Kuruk Kuruk.

Echoing sound could be heard from the cave. A monster came out while making crackling sound.

It looked like how a weasel or otter would look like if it was enlarged to the size of a crocodile.

It looked pretty cute.

Things unique about it were that it was standing up right in two feet even with its bent back.

Also, its front claws were wrapped in electricity.

[Soul Steal]

I activated Soul Steal to weaken it and thought about it.

How should I attack an enemy who has electricity on its claws?

I don't even have any weapon.

Moreover, there are lots of water around me at the moment.

I think I'll get electrocuted if I got near it.

Wait, if it just touches the water with that claw, am I going to get electrocuted to death with it?

I never met anything that attacks with electricity, so I don't know a way to deal with it.

[Kiiiiiaaaaaoook!]

The weasel roared and charged at me from the front.

Although it is wrapped in electricity, if it is going to charge at me thoughtlessly, then...

[Talaria's Wings]

I swung the left wing and struck the weasel.

Not only do the wings have strong resistance to magic, they are also not directly connected to my body.

Each wing is about two meters in span. I just need to kill it before it gets near me.

Let's kill it fast.

Although rain stopped, there are too much water everywhere.

There is danger of getting electrocuted just from having that bastard around me.

I am curious how powerful the electric attack from that thing would be, but I might go straight to the grave if I tried it out now on my body.

The weasel was thrown off after getting struck by the wing. It was struggling to get up. I set the direction as I looked at the weasel.

[Blink]

Kek!

Along with that last word, the weasel was thrown off to the tree at a distance. It got stuck at the tree trunk.

It was the certain kill combo using the Talaria's Wing and Blink that I started to use since the Fourth Floor.

Its power was still cheat-like even at the 12th Floor.

It seemed the weasel lost its life. My stamina was replenished a little from the Soul Steal's effect.

It took me by a surprise because I ran into a monster that had a skill related to electricity in a situation like this.

I think I should learn something like a resistance to electricity when I get the chance.

I left the monster's dead body be for now. I entered the cave to check out the inside.

Oh... It is nicer than I thought?

It is bigger than I expected.

Inside of the cave was filled with warm air. Other than the smell of the soil, it didn't have any horrible stench.

The cave was about two meters in height, so it didn't cause inconvenience in moving around inside.

[Battle Focus]

Out of reflex, I used Battle Focus.

I heard something just now.

For now, I don't see anything.

It is not to my front.

It could be my rear, side or ceiling.

However, those are also unlikely.

I entered the cave and had been moving further in while carefully looking around the area.

There is no way I would have moved past an enemy without noticing it.

Is it a monster with invisibility or stealth skill?

Damn it, I totally fell for it.

I felt the presence, but I could not figure out the direction.

[Sensory Boost]

I even used the Sensory Boost, a skill that enhanced all of my senses temporarily.

Even with my heightened senses, I still didn't notice anything.

The presence just zapped past me during that one instant.

There are only two possible choices that the opponent could make. It could either attack or run.

I calmly waited for its next move.

Inside the world of accelerated consciousness and heightened senses, I quietly waited.

Left.

Rear.

Ceiling.

I turned around as soon as I felt a small movement and realized the location.

[Kyaaaaak!]

It came flying toward my face. I grabbed it with my left hand.

Damn it. I shouldn't grab it. Out of reflex, I ended up grabbing it because it was small.

I grabbed on to it tighter with my left hand and swung my right hand after wrapping it in mana.

Along with a slicing sound, the enemy's head was cut off.

Tsk.

I clicked my tongue and dropped the dead body of the small weasel monster.

It looks like it must be the offspring of the one I fought earlier.

Unlike its mother, which was the size of a crocodile, this baby weasel was the size of a person's palm.

Considering the difference in size, it must have been born only recently, yet it was quite dangerous.

It seems all beings in this jungle have all sorts of skills, near max level skills on top of that. This is incredibly frustrating.

I checked the top of my hand.

Before the weasel monster's baby died, it left a long wound on the

top of my hand.

It was not deep, but...

Soon, the wound started to close slowly.

Actually, I guess I shouldn't call this kind of healing speed as slow.

The wound was completely healed in about a minute.

[Natural Healing Power (Lv.11)]

[Super Regeneration (Lv.5)]

Along with the Soul Steal, they were the skills that enabled me to go through more party stages that came after the Sixth Floor.

They were incredibly useful because I now possessed methods of healing other than relying on expensive healing potions.

Of course, they improved my chance of survival. Also, they greatly increased my range of activities.

I also could save up on potions a little more.

However, the Super Regeneration Skill had one drawback that

was hidden.

[Super Regeneration (Lv.5)]

Description: It dramatically increases the speed of wound healing. Stamina is spent in proportion to the healing speed.

It was the fact that it used stamina.

On top of that, it uses quite a lot of it.

My stamina points grew a lot since I started the Tutorial. Also, because I could use stamina potions when needed, I never thought of this as a big drawback.

Moreover, compared to the loss of stamina, the wound healing was highly effective.

However, I was almost at the bottom of my stamina, and I didn't even have any stamina potion. In this situation, it felt like a huge drawback.

I felt the blood being drawn out of my face. My view looked like it was spinning in disarray.

Ah... I have not felt this in a while.

I thought about the orangutan monster's meat that I threw away to the ground a while ago.

Maybe I should have just eaten it.

Perhaps I shouldn't have over-exerted myself and walk through the rain.

I used a skill as I thought about all sorts of regrets that came up in my mind.

Like that, I lied on the floor as if I was collapsing on it.

Things I need to do are coming to my mind, but I think I'll need to rest first.

*

I felt the presence of someone nearby. Out of reflex, I opened my eyes and lifted my head.

At a corner near the entrance, I could see the back of a lizardman who was keeping watch.

[Keruk. Are you awake already, Hubby? Get up. I prepared meals.]

Chapter 62 - Tutorial 12th Floor (5)

[Keruk. Are you awake already, Hubby? Get up. I prepared meals for you.]

I could see the back of Idaltaru, no... Idy, sitting at the entrance to stand watch.

I felt around with my hand to find a small pebble. I picked it up and threw it toward the back of Idy's head.

The pebble struck Idy's tail.

“I told you not to call me by that.”

[Captain, you are too shy, keruk.]

Um...

I still feel very weak.

Still lying on the ground, I tried opening and closing my hands as I asked Idy,

“How long was I asleep?”

[You slept for about three hours. Keruk. That's pretty long for

you, isn't that right, Captain?]

If I did sleep for three hours, that really was long.

If I didn't summon Idy, let alone three hours, I probably couldn't have been able to sleep for even ten minutes.

I had been suffering from inability to fall asleep lately. Because of this, it is impossible for me to fall asleep in dangerous places where I can't put my mind at ease.

In times like that, I had to either put myself to sleep using a sleeping pill or wait until I just fainted.

I am thankful that Idy is here.

Dead Summoning was indeed an incredible skill.

It had limitations of only allowing five summoning and requiring objects with souls. However, it was still incredible.

Bringing back and summoning the dead is the kind of power that could not be obtained by anyone other than gods.

Its effectiveness would be even greater if I summon someone stronger after developing further at a higher floor.

Still, I don't think it was a waste at all to have summoned Idy here.

Before I could rest, to be certain of my safety, I needed her here right away. Also, in a situation like the 12th Floor where I have to stay inside the stage for a very long time, having someone besides me was a really big help.

I could make a better decision just from having a conversation with someone.

Also, it alleviates loneliness which rots away my mind.

It was at the Eighth Floor when I summoned her for the first time using the Dead Summoning.

I just needed someone to draw the enemies' attention, but she was far more talented than I expected.

Not just her combat abilities, but her calm personality, which was not like the typical violent lizardman, helped.

Of course, she didn't look calm at all when she was burning with the focused desire to take me as her husband at the Fifth Floor.

We had been having conversations since then and developed understanding of each other. Now, we had become pretty close.

According to her, to the lizardman kind, the only thing that mattered in choosing the mate was strength, and stronger meant a better mate. This applied to both genders.

Because of this, to the lizardman's kind, being desired by someone stronger is obviously something to be happy about, and Idaltaru also added that almost nobody refuses such proposals.

She said the lizardman's kind as a whole pursue strength and hone their skills for the sake of mating with someone stronger. It was their most important reason.

Because of this, when I refused her mating proposal, she could not understand me and was infuriated.

Objectively looking at the strength, she was definitely stronger than me at the time.

Now that I have surpassed her in strength, the situation changed a little.

In lizardmen's culture, the right to choose the mate was held by the strong. Since I was stronger than her and I already refused her, she didn't obsess over it anymore.

Actually, other lizardmen that I met at the Fifth Floor had that kind of tendencies, so it was easy to understand.

I also explained to her about human kind's principles.

I explained that forcing someone to mate is a crime, and humans do not like the idea of mating with beings other than humans.

Actually, I don't think the whole species issue would matter if it was with gorgeous beings like elves from fantasy fictions, but...

For now, that's how I explained it to her.

Idy looked very disappointed, but I ignored it.

Since then, with her as my grunt, no... as a comrade, we had been doing well together.

She occasionally called me hubby or whatever, but it became an inside joke between us.

She came next to me and gave me a thinly sliced meat.

As always, I thought it was a meat jerky as I put it in my mouth, but it was raw meat.

“Uuuug... What is this.”

[Just eat it. Think of it as tartare. Captain, you have poison resistance, so you cannot get sick from it anyway. Keruk.]

Fortunately, the meat was, perhaps because a lot of the blood was drained or it just was that kind of portion, not hard to eat.

Compared to the orangutan meat, this was far more edible.

[It is the meat from the baby Lamburu that was on the ground here. I prepared it right away, so it should be edible.]

It seemed that weasel monster was called Lamburu.

“Idy. You know a little bit about Ihaoi? I think that’s what this place is called.”

[I don’t know. Keruk.]

Her voice was covered with disappointment, and that conveyed the meaning of what she really wanted to say.

It was not that she didn’t really know about Ihaoi. It was that she did not know if she once knew about Ihaoi or not.

Ever since I had Idy as my comrade, I had asked her a lot of questions.

I asked her how she ended up in the Tutorial, what is the Tutorial’s purpose, what it was like before...

I asked her many questions, and Idy was not able to answer most of them.

She said that inside of her head felt like it was turning white whenever she tried to remember the answer, leading to nothing.

She said it was as if a white paint was pasted over her memories.

She looked sad and upset whenever this kind of condition happened, so I didn't try to uncover her past or the true identity of the Tutorial.

She could only tell me about the common knowledge and her skills that she used to have in her past.

Still, she could not remember in detail about anything related to Tutorial.

Um...

Since she knew the name of this monster, maybe she knew about this place in the past.

[Keruk. What's your plan from now on? First, I would like to know the clearing goal.]

I explained briefly about the information and the clearing goal that the message told me.

[In that case, if you just spend 25 days quietly in this cave, you will be able to clear this stage safely. Keruk. I like this stage a lot. Keruk.]

What do you like about this stage?

[Keruk. Keruk.]

Idy moved her eyes all around the place and did not respond to my question.

“I will not be able to clear it right away. Because of the remaining time, clearing is simply impossible.”

[What do you mean it is impossible to clear?]

I explained to her about the time left in the round and the time I need to spend here to clear the stage.

[As usual, you have foul luck, Captain. Keruk.]

It almost sounds like you are saying I bring foul luck instead of saying I just have bad luck.

Anyway, now that it came to this, I plan to focus on growth and throw away my impatience.

I also explained the Focused Effort skill to Idy.

[I see. I think it would be a good idea to learn about the skill in detail. If you spend the time by focusing on your growth with that skill, this won't exactly be a waste of time. However, first, we need to secure your survival with certainty. Keruk.]

“Yes, right. We should set this area as our territory and hunt the ones living nearby one by one. As we do that, ones coming near the cave will start to disappear over time.”

Residents of this jungle are all wild animals or monsters.

High level predators probably all have their own territories and not go past their boundaries.

[Keruk. There are bastards that occasionally go past their territories or try to take over another's territory. However, your plan is definitely a logical one.]

[However, if we are too active, high level predators who consider this area as their territories may come.]

I think it will be all right.

The usual bastards won't be able to survive the coordinated attack from me and Idy. In the worst case, we just need to run

away.

The high level predators are very likely to be acting alone instead of being in groups like the orangutans.

Moreover, this jungle is vast. It is really, seriously huge.

When I was at the top of the cliff, in all directions, the jungle stretched to the end of the horizon.

Running into a strong predator that we have to run away from is probably not going to happen easily.

[Keruk. Well then, are we going to make the move right now?]

“No. The sun is down, so let’s start tomorrow morning.”

Both Idy and I can move without being seriously hindered by darkness. However, that is about it.

I don’t want to invite danger by fighting nocturnal monsters in middle of darkness in the jungle.

I also still feel tired too.

“Let’s try out the Focused Effort skill. I’ll be using the Mana Circuit, so please guard the area for me.”

[I got it. Keruk.]

*

I spent the time until the morning by operating the Mana Circuit.

However, there wasn't any noticeable growth. I didn't notice any response from the Focused Effort either.

I don't know if I need to focus longer or if the method is wrong.

Let's try again later.

[Keruk. I am ready. Hurry up and come out, Captain.]

Idy told me to hurry up, so I came out of the cave.

I saw that the scenery changed a bit.

What I saw were traps hidden here and there in the bushes.

There were traps made with vines and sharpened woods. There were also craters.

I don't know about other kinds, but I am excellent at finding

those kinds of traps.

I had been tormented by such traps so much since I entered the Tutorial, so...

Besides the traps, there were ash like things spread at the cave entrance's floor.

“What is this?”

[I dried leaves called Kikimu and crushed them into fine powder. The animals in this jungle hate this, so they won't approach the place easily if you have this spread here. Keruk.]

What the, just when did you do this?

You crushed it into fine powder? You probably don't even have tools for that.

You dried it? You dried leaves in this humid jungle?

Also, just when did you make all those traps? Was it even possible given the time frame?

[Keruk. Keruk. There are ways.]

Idy smiled. Her smile was full of pride. Looking at her smile, I

panicked a little.

I didn't expect this much from Idy.

Until now, her role was simply fighting along side me and standing guard while I rested.

I told her honestly how impressed I was and praised her.

Having heard my praise, her tail started to waggle left and right, but I ignored it.

[Keruk. Let's go try hunting.]

In a mysterious way, the back of Idy was dependable to look at. I followed her into the grass.

*

I kicked the dead body of a bizarre looking boar, which looked as if it was exposed to radiation and mutated. I said,

“Hey, how come you are also good at hunting?”

I didn't know we would succeed in hunting so fast.

It was not like we were hunting monsters inside a video game.

We were in a huge jungle. It is not easy to find a prey of this size and track it.

Actually, running into one alone has pretty low probability of happening.

[Keruk. Because I was shunned by my own kind, I always had to hunt alone and procure food. Thanks to that, I have plenty of hunting experience. Keruk.]

Story of her dark, sad past came out of the blue. Having heard it, I praised her with a bit of exaggeration.

Idy made keruk keruk noise and acted happy.

[So, are you going to continue hunting?]

“We should.”

[In that case, what are you going to do about this one? If we take it to the cave, we will lose too much time.]

“Let’s just leave it here. Our plan is hunting all dangerous monsters nearby anyway. If more bastards come lurking around after smelling the dead body and the blood, that will make our hunting easier.”

[Keruk. I got it.]

Idy gave a brief response. She raised her trident, cut the monster's body into pieces and brought out its intestines.

Certainly, doing that will make the smell of blood to spread more.

“Idy. I'm thinking about finding the prey myself from now on. I would like you to handle the battle.”

[Keruk. That won't be a problem for me, but isn't that inefficient assignment of roles?]

“It is, but I would like to earn skills related to search or tracking. That's why.”

One thing that hanged over my head the entire time while I was being chased by the orangutans was that these bastards weren't just tracking me simply based on my foot prints and smell.

Even when I crossed water or valley with the Talaria's Wings, they somehow knew where I was and kept chasing after me.

I am thinking that one of the orangutans had search or tracking skill and used it to determine my location.

In that case, since it would be a very useful skill, I would like to acquire it here.

I had been simply using my sight or hearing to identify the enemy's location.

With the enhancements from Sensory Strengthening and Amplification Skills, I never felt my senses were insufficient.

However, they didn't work against enemies with stealth or invisibility skills.

If the orangutan that used the invisibility skill and the weasel baby that used the stealth skill to hide at the cave were stronger...

If they were strong as me even without skills, it would have been really dangerous.

I would not even have been able to notice their presence a little. I could have died at the spot.

I needed a solution against such skills.

The skill I'm trying to acquire this time could be the solution.

In the process of obtaining this skill, I should have Idy handle combat and all other tasks besides tracking the prey which could benefit from the Focused Effort Skill.

First, I learned the basic of hunting from Idy.

She said it would be very inefficient for me to aimlessly look around for a prey. She recommended learning her knowledge and techniques first.

Things like selecting the hunting route, methods of confirming the prey's territory or movement path based on foot prints or excrements, how to hide my own presence and approach the prey, etc...

Idy explained in detail about hunting in a way that was easy for me to understand.

It seemed she was also skilled at teaching things to others.

After that, I tried operating the mana in the way that Idy advised me to do.

I practiced using mana to further increase the movement suppression to move more stealthily.

On top of this, I also learned how to spread thin layer of mana around me to feel the situation around me.

It was not easy at first.

When I tried to spread the mana around me, the mana's concentration was too thick.

In that attempt, not only did the mana became visible, I couldn't even spread them far.

It took quite a while until I was able to skillfully spread the mana and feel the situation around me.

This was a high level mana operation skill. It was to the point where my Mana Circuit Skill leveled up once while I practiced this skill.

Like that, for two weeks, with the cave as my base of operation, I hunted the monsters around the cave and honed my skill.

[You acquired Mana Circuit Lv.11]

[You acquired Detection Lv.3]

[You acquired Stealth Lv.11]

Chapter 63 - Tutorial 12th Floor (6)

Kuuuuuaaaak!

Facing a giant monster charging at her with beastly roar, Idy calmly pierced the top of its head and killed it.

The monster fell before it even had a chance to struggle.

That was no ordinary attack.

The monster could not have fallen silent like that as if it was falling asleep without even having a chance to twitch unless that was the case.

Idy is growing. On top of that, she is growing fast.

Could it be that she is also affected by the Tutorial's growth effect?

I swallowed that suspicion for now.

In the end, it was yet another question that Idy herself could not answer.

“Keruk. I think there isn't any monsters left nearby that is worth tracking down to hunt.”

“Right. This one is probably the last one.”

For the past two weeks, other than the time spent on eating and excreting, we threw all of our time into hunting.

The result was significant because we continued hunting even after the sunset ever since we became used to hunting in the jungle.

Not only did I earn the Detection Skill that I wanted, the Mana Circuit’s operation mastery increased, and its level also increased.

Stealth Skill also leveled up by one.

Most importantly, we hunted most of monsters around the cave which we decided as our main camp.

There still were small animals, but they were absolutely not threats to us.

“What are you going to do now, Captain? Shall we go back home?”

She had been calling the cave as home.

Also, as if the place was really her own home, she carefully tidied up the place and made things like furniture.

“Okay. Let’s go back. I think I just have to focus on training for a while at home.”

“Keruk. Keruk. All right.”

Idy lead the way. She walked as she cut away grasses that were blocking her path.

She seemed very happy for some reason. It was strange, but I assumed she must be happy because we were going home to rest. I just followed her.

*

“You want to learn my spear techniques?”

I quietly nodded.

It was something I had been thinking about since a while ago.

I would be able to develop faster and easier with someone teaching me the art.

Not only that, she might be able to find faults in me that I have not noticed.

All of sword and hand-to-hand techniques I mastered so far were something I thought of and trained by myself.

What I achieved were worthy of being proud of. However, I knew nothing of techniques that I have not thought of or faced against.

Of all that I have met in the Tutorial, Idy possessed the most superior fighting abilities.

At the Fifth Floor's boss room, before she lost her cool and went berserk, instead of simply using her strength and special skills to overwhelm me, she used her spear techniques to fight me.

Moreover, of all boss rooms I have seen so far, Idy was the only one that showed up by herself in a boss room.

After learning spear techniques from her, I would also like to obtain knowledge and methods on fundamental techniques about sword and hand-to-hand combat.

If the situation was like the usual, I would not have thought about spending leisurely time learning spear techniques from her because of the time limit on the Dead Summon.

However, because of the 12th Floor's special characteristic, I had to spend time here until the round ended.

I could go beyond the nearby area and hunt the monsters there, but I don't think that's as important as learning spear techniques

from Idy.

“Is the idea no good?”

“Keruk. Wait here for a minute.”

Idy said that and left the cave.

I panicked, but I decided to wait quietly in the cave.

Could it be that asking a lizardman to teach me fighting techniques is a serious sin or very rude thing to do?

I really want to learn the spear techniques from her while I have the chance here...

Since I have to wait for her, let's run the Mana Circuit quietly while at it.

I sat at the cushion that Idy made, closed my eyes and focused my mind at the flow of mana.

Lately, I had been running the Mana Circuit whenever I had the time, just like how I inflicted injuries on myself to improve my passive resistance skills.

I probably won't have to wait long, so there won't be enough

time to activate the Focused Effort skill.

From what I have found out so far, I need to focus on one thing and train if I want to activate the Focused Effort Skill, and I have to for eight hours at least.

I could feel the skill being activated after eight hours.

It felt similar to Persistence Skill when activated, so it was easy to notice.

Also, even if I mixed in other activities such as finding the location of the prey, breathing, blinking, drinking water, listening to Idy's advice or having conversations and others that are related to the training, it was still possible to activate the Focused Effort Skill.

My development rate increased substantially ever since I figured out how to activate the Focused Effort Skill.

It brought out incredible development efficiency once activated.

Without it, I couldn't have acquired the Detection Skill and developed Stealth and Mana Circuit Skills further within just two weeks.

In particular, the Detection Skill was a high dimensional skill far beyond my imagination.

If I didn't have Idy or Focused Effort Skill, it would have been difficult for me to acquire this skill by myself.

I used the Detection Skill while running Mana Circuit.

Because the Detection Skill itself was about operating mana, it was good to train both at the same time.

Training became that much more difficult, but now, I could focus even better with increased difficulty.

Thinly spread mana searched the insides of the cave. It detected a small bug that was moving around on the ceiling.

If this was any other day, I would have been satisfied with that and try feeling the outside of the cave. However, I tried something different this time.

I focused on the bug that I detected already.

I could only feel the bug's presence so far. However, as I repeated focusing, I could feel the bug's shape in a bit more detail.

[Battle Focus]

I increased the focus and carefully managed the operation of Mana Circuit.

Afterwards, I focused on the bug once again.

The shape of the bug felt through the mana became even clearer.

It was as if I was doing a 3D scan. I could feel its mouth, antennas, legs and shell in three dimensions.

I tried to feel the bug's shape in even greater detail.

I noticed each of minuscule hair on the bug's legs, extremely small hair that could not be seen by a human being's naked eyes.

Puk...

With that sound, I suddenly got nose bleed.

Could I go further?

As soon as I thought that, my head felt dizzy and the Battle Focus was canceled.

It wasn't that I was at the limit on my ability to focus. It seemed that I was still lacking in my ability to manage mana.

My head is pulsating.

It feels stiff around my eyes, and these parts hurt every time my heart beats.

I had experienced the symptoms many times while I trained in Mana Circuit, so I didn't panic. Instead, I pressed on temples on my head and ignored the pain.

“Keruk! Captain! Come outside!”

Idy called me from outside of the cave.

Her voice sounded bright.

Is she going to teach me spear techniques?

I quickly wiped off the nose bleed and came outside. Idy handed me a staff that looked like she carved it out of a piece of wood.

Unlike my concern, Idy seemed quite excited.

It seemed she was very happy to teach me spear techniques.

“Keruk. For now, use this. I made it quickly.”

It looked like she had been looking around to find a suitable piece of wood and made this.

It didn't have an edge at the tip, so it couldn't be called a spear but a staff.

Still, let's call it a practice spear.

Also,

“From now on, I think I should call you Idyaamong.”

“Keruk. What does it mean? Is it something good?”

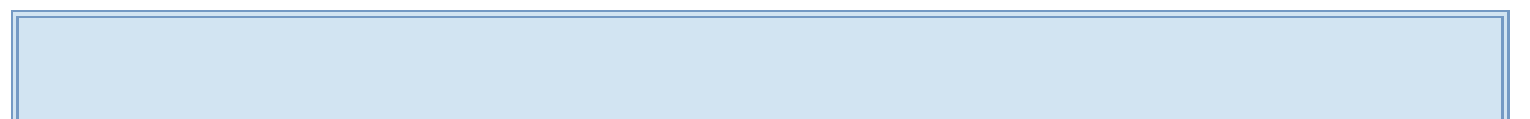
“Of course, it is something good. It means you are incredibly talented.”

“Keruk Keruk.”

As if she was embarrassed, she turned her head to the side and acted happy.

As I expected, Idy was exceptionally good at teaching something to another.

From the basic, step by step, she explained in detail. Because of this, I could understand with ease the basic theories of the techniques and their applications.



[You acquired Basic Spear Technique Lv.6]

[You acquired Mid-level Hand-to-Hand Combat Technique Lv.2]

[You acquire Mid-level Swordsmanship Lv.4]

As expected, although I was mostly learning spear techniques, the training resulted in progress on hand-to-hand combat and swordsmanship.

In particular, the explanations about steps that Idy gave me as I learned spear techniques were very helpful.

The theory was very different from what I learned during middle school at a Kendo class. However, because I had the body of a super human and used skills that defied common sense now, Idy's methods were the right answer.

“Keruk. As I thought, you are amazing, Captain.”

“Geez. Come on.”

“You would have been perfect if it wasn't for you occasionally

showing underhanded and dirty side. Keruk.”

Hey, do you have any idea how important being underhanded and dirty are to a professional gamer?

When it comes to a duel, wrecking the opponent’s mental is half way to the victory.

“Keruk. I thought this when I heard this the last time, but so called professional gamer is really not something I would want to be.”

How could you say that in front of one, you rascal?

“Although this place is the Tutorial stage that helps the challenger’s growth and you also have the power skill called Focused Effort, your growth rate is still very fast. This can only be explained by your talent. You are incredible. Keruk.”

“Come on. I know. I am pretty damn talented.”

Having heard what I said, Idy twitched her nose lightly and said,

“Keruk. Besides being underhanded, I found another fault in you, Captain.”

“What is it?”

“You are a bit of an arrogant jerk”

I know that.

I heard that a lot in my life.

While being in the 12th Floor’s stage, skills related to fighting were not the only ones I acquired.

I also earned something completely unexpected.

It was when I was at front of the cave and roasting the meat that Idy procured.

[You acquired Entry-Level Cooking Lv.1]

Um... What is this?

Could it be that thing?

In a fantasy game, the skill for unrivaled production professionals that occasionally make appearances?

Could I be able to obtain high level cooking skills, blow up my stats by eating the meals I cooked and have a whole bunch of

enhancement effects on my attributes and passive resistances, becoming unsurpassed?

“Keruk, although this will be obvious, there are no such ridiculous effects included in the cooking skill.”

Idy said as she brought the salad she put on the dish she made by carving a piece of wood.

“If there are foods that can have that kind of effect, then that would probably be the effect from the ingredients, not the skill of the cook.”

... That’s probably right.

I worked up my appetite and looked at the table where the dinner was ready.

There were salad, a stew of unknown origin, roasted meat and unidentified vegetable mix. Also, lastly, there was the salted smoked meat.

They were too substantial to be called a dinner inside a stage of Hell Difficulty.

On top of that, I had no idea what the ingredients were, let alone where Idy got them.

An even more important problem was that all of these foods were delicious, seriously delicious.

Other than the cake that I occasionally ate with Kiri Kiri, I always had been taking care of meals with meat jerkies. Perhaps that's why.

Every time I ate meals prepared by Idy, I was overwhelmed by bliss.

Like that, I diligently focused on training, ate delicious food, and occasionally went out for a walk with Idy to hunt and patrol to spend the rest of the days.

The frustration I felt when I first entered the 12th Floor was now completely gone.

The life here is far smoother and more fun than being in the waiting room. The development is also going well. This is the best?

[Round 14, Day 27, 00:00]

[The day of the great harmony will commence.]

[The day of the great harmony will continue for 24 hours.
Remaining time: 23:59]

[Please enter. Time remaining until forced summon: 5 hours]

Chapter 64 - The Day Of The Great Harmony (4)

[The day of the great harmony will commence.]

[The day of the great harmony will continue for 24 hours.
Remaining time: 22:40]

[Please enter. Time remaining until forced summon: 3 hours
40 minutes]

“Idy, would you like to go too? If not, it’s fine to just hold the port. Again, there probably won’t be anything fun happening there this time either.”

“Keruk. Of course I will go.”

It would be boring there and there wouldn’t be anyone who would be able to understand her language either.

Still, I couldn’t just leave her here when she said she wanted to go, so I decided to go with Idy.

The day of the great harmony was held at Kiri Kiri’s green field again.

Of course, Kiri Kiri was not there.

Instead, what I saw there was Park Jung-ah beating the crap out of the people responsible for triggering the day of the great harmony.

Is it because I came in a little late? It looks like the situation is already wrapped up.

I just stood at a distance and watched.

There is no need for me to show my face now and cause confusion.

“Keruk. Humans have a violent side that I never imagined.”

That’s true.

The punishment lasted for another thirty minutes before ending as I sat in the corner of the field, waiting. By that time, I was extremely bored and my face was frustratingly contorted.

However, Park Jung-ah had no intention of finishing it yet.

Now, she gathered the members of the Order and started a verbose lecture.

The content of her lecture was pretty harsh.

Wow, did she serve in the military?

She is totally a top-notch at slapping around grunts.

I became suspicious of Park Jung-ah's school days.

“Keruk. For how much longer do we need to just wait here? Captain?”

“... Let's go.”

We walked around the back of the Order members who were listening to Park Jung-ah's rough lecture. We were hoping nobody would notice us, but unfortunately, I locked eyes with Park Jung-ah's.

Park Jung-ah was chirping away her foul mouth. However, as soon as she saw me, she slightly lowered her head to greet me.

The members of the Order, who were drowning in Park Jung-ah's insults presently, also turned their heads towards our direction. We ended up receiving unwanted attention.

Tsk.

Hurriedly, I saluted to Park Jung-ah and quickly left the scene.

I moved to middle of the field and opened the inventory.

“Inventory.”

Wow... It's so great to meet my precious items again.

How have you been? My precious babies...

I brought out a magic tent, but it was no ordinary magic tent.

It is a reward item that I got after clearing none other than the Ninth Floor.

I tossed the magic tent haphazardly on the ground and the large tent set itself up, occupying about 50 square meters.

Kuuuu.... All right.

I entered the tent with Idy.

The inside had a few small chairs and a bed.

‘I should have brought this into the 12th Floor.’

I thought that as I sat on the chair and yawned, stretching my arms.

As for Idy, the chair was not big enough for her, so she just sat on the floor.

“Well, the tent was upgraded. As I thought, points are great.”

Kim Min-huk entered the tent as he swept the tent’s flaps toward the side.

“I didn’t buy this with points.”

“Your lizardman friend is here again? Hello.”

Kim Min-huk waved at Idy and said hello.

“Keruk Keruk.”

Idy also waved her hand back at her.

“What are you doing here? You were nowhere to be found when we were busy. Have you have been sitting around on your ass here?”

“We got here only a while ago. It looked like there wasn’t anything in particular that needed me. Park Jung-ah was

slaughtering the kids, so I ran off instead of meddling.”

The topic turned to Park Jung-ah and her current situation.

“She’s overdoing it a little. Still, I think this is necessary at the moment. She is strict to others, but she is as strict to herself. Also, it is not like there are serious complaints about it either.”

Overdoing it a little?

That’s a type of mental illness.

Unable to escape the sense of anxiety because of an uncertain future and past regrets, she is forcing her perfectionist goals onto others

The first problem was that she was imposing such strict guidelines to others in addition to herself.

The second problem was that human beings simply could not maintain such perfection forever. One day, she will be forced to realize that she cannot live up to her own ideals.

Normal people would just console themselves about such failures and move on, saying things like it could happen or they performed well enough.

However, Park Jung-ah cannot do that.

Instead of letting go, she will criticize and hate herself for being imperfect. She will only suffer further from such thoughts.

When that happens, the problem will really get serious because that's when people start to break.

I'm speaking from personal experience.

"You need to look after her. That woman is at the level of a runaway train. If you cannot get brakes for her, at least make sure she does not get derailed."

"You rascal. You always ask me to do the heavy lifting. You don't need to tell me. I've already been doing my best."

Kim Min-huk complained before sending a message to someone.

"I contacted the user of Blitz Skill that I told you about before. The user will come here soon."

Almost immediately after Kim Min-huk said that, the tent door was swept open.

"Ah... Hello?"

It was a young boy with seemingly shy and good-natured personality with a round appearance.

He looks like he is in middle school.

“He is a middle schooler.”

“Excuse me... I... My name is Lee Jun-suk.”

Why is this kid shrinking in front of me?

“Keruk Keruk.”

I looked to the side and noticed Idy looking at Lee Jun-suk.

“Idy. This kid is scared because of you.”

“Keruk. You are accusing the wrong person. That little human is shaking from looking at you.”

“Hey. Are you scared because of me?”

Having heard what Kim Min-huk said, I also felt wronged.

Seriously, I have a lizardman sitting next to me, but this kid is scared of me instead? Does that make sense?

“Hey, that’s not it, right? You are not scared of me, right?”

“N... No! I am sorry. It’s my fault...”

Lee Jun-suk was shaking as he apologized over and over. I felt conflicted inside.

When did my image become like this?

Lee Jun-suk was at Eighth Floor of the Hard Difficulty.

On top of that, he was a mage who mostly used Blitz magic in addition to being a member of the Order of Virtue in the Hard Difficulty.

I contacted Lee Jun-suk through Kim Min-huk because I wanted to improve my passive skill.

“Sit here. I just need you to use the Blitz Skill at my arm. If you run out of mana, just tell me. I have plenty of potions.”

“Pardon? Yes... Will it really be all right? It will hurt a lot...”

“Hey, that guy plays catch with heat stone to increase his fire resistance. Don’t worry and get started.”

Lee Jun-suk grabbed my arm and started to use the Blitz Skill, and making my arm twitch.

Looks like I'll have to restrain my arm for this.

I asked Idy to tie my arm to the chair's arm rest with a rope.

"Now, try it at a higher strength."

"Pardon? Increasing its strength beyond this could be dangerous."

"I'll be healed automatically, so why does that matter?"

Lee Jun-suk was breaking a cold sweat and didn't know what to do. Leaving him be, I turned my head toward Kim Min-huk.

"So, why did the day of the great harmony happen this time?"

"... Didn't I tell you last time? At the 30th Floor residential district in the Easy Difficulty, someone formed a small syndicate, manufactured narcotics and distributed them. It seemed they were trying to bend the people to their will using the narcotics."

"How did it get resolved?"

"I also told you that last time, you rascal. We had a member of the Order infiltrate the syndicate. Once our member rose to the ranks of management, we got a list of the syndicate members."

“That worked? That must’ve been dangerous. People sure volunteer easily for things like that.”

It was always like that.

The Order of Vigilance always infiltrated said problematic groups and procured the information.

After that, as soon as the day of the great harmony commenced, the order ambushed the group and handled the problem.

They were no different from secret agents. They were literally [007s](#).

PR Note: This is a reference to Bond and how his identification as “Agent 007.”

The members of the Order who were active on the open were well known throughout the Community. However, the members who were hiding among regular users were completely unknown.

People didn’t know who they were or how many there were.

The only person that knew was Kim Min-huk.

So far, there was never a problem that didn’t get resolved after the day of the great harmony.

Their success rate was 100%.

Is that even possible? It is not easy for me to believe that people would go such great lengths to maintain public order.

“Responsibility, justice, goal, anxiety, danger... Do you have any idea how critical those things are to people? This is especially true in an extraordinary environment like the Tutorial. Everyone volunteers with just a little bit of encouragement. They are doing it because it can be handled.”

You are probably the only one in the world who can say it so easily.

“Actually, I don’t know how many secret agents there are. The operation is managed in a point organizations style. There probably are more than what people believe.”

“Looks like the Tutorial will get filled with secret agents later.”

“If that happens, I could not ask for a better setting. That would be perfect. Everyone is in check against each other, and all individuals are protecting justice. That’s no different from a utopia.”

Are you sure? I don’t think that would be the case.

At that moment, I could feel serious pain in my arm.

“I... I’m sorry. Are you all right?”

My arm’s skin was burning black.

I waited for a moment and the healing effect from the day of the great harmony was activated.

The part that was burned to crisp was erased completely along with other less-heavily burnt parts.

“It’s all right. Looks like this will also increase my fire resistance.”

“By the way, didn’t you say you had been focusing on the Mana Circuit instead of resistance skills?”

“I had been. Still, it looks like I’ll need resistance against Blitz. My body movement is seriously hindered whenever I get struck by Blitz Skill. Also, there are so many bastards in my current stage that have this skill, so really need this resistance.”

Kim Min-huk was looking at me as if he was curious. I gave a simple summary of how the 12th Floor in Hell Difficulty was like.

“Also, I am still running the Mana Circuit.”

“What? Now? ... Since when?”

“Ever since I entered here.”

Kim Min-huk looked at my arm that Lee Jun-suk was shooting Blitz at. He then looked at my face.

“You are running the Mana Circuit in that state?”

“Yes.”

“You really are a fiend.”

I got electric shock massage for about ten minutes and talked to Kim Min-huk before the tent entrance was swept open by a muscular man.

“I was wondering where you guys all went off to. I see you were all here sucking on honey. Oh, hello Lizardman friend.”

It was Park Jong-sik.

If I was to say I was managing Hell Difficulty, Kim Min-huk was managing the Normal Difficulty, and Park Jung-ah was managing Easy Difficulty, it could be said that Park Jong-sik was managing Hard Difficulty.

“What do you mean sucking on honey, Big Bro Jong-sik? It was just that it didn’t look like there was anything that needed me, so I

just politely left the scene on your behalf.”

“Yo. Jun-suk. You are here too.”

Park Jong-sik ignored my excuse and greeted Lee Jun-suk.

He then flipped a chair around and sat as he said,

“Things are almost wrapped up. Everyone will come here soon. We need to have a meeting, don’t we?”

As he said, a whole bunch of people came in through the tent.

They were the core members of the Order, including Park Jung-ah.

“Keruk.”

It seemed Idy was uncomfortable with having so many people entering the tent at once.

I stopped Lee Jun-suk from using Blitz and I untied the rope on my arm.

After that, I corrected my pose.

There were too many people here; it was impossible to sit

comfortably.

Even though they were the core members of the Order, I couldn't sit comfortably

Kim Min-huk and Park Jong-sik were about all who I felt I could be at ease.

It wasn't that the people made me feel uncomfortable.

It was just that I had a need to maintain a respectable image and maintain distance from the people.

That was helpful for maintaining the Order of Vigilance.

Actually, I had a similar experience when I was a professional gamer.

When I was at the top, I was showered by the gazes of countless people looking up at me.

Countless losers and competitors would focus their glares at me.

There was a time when I enjoyed it. However, because I also experienced a nose dive in my career, I was unfamiliar with my current position here where I was being looked up to by everyone else.

The tent was pretty big inside. However, the inside became quickly packed after more than a dozen people entered.

There weren't enough chairs either. Most people just sat on the floor like Idy or just stood. Like that, we decided to start the meeting.

“Well then, we will start the meeting.”

The meeting started with Park Jung-ah's words.

First, she went over the cause of the day of the harmony and current progress to the solution.

She then proposed a preventive measure against a similar incident in the future.

After that, brief reports from the managers of each difficulties were given.

Up to this point, the meeting was progressing as the usual.

It was not so different from the meetings we held through the Community messenger.

“Now, we have two very important things left.”

Kim Min-huk refreshed the atmosphere and said,

“First, Big Bro Chan-yong cleared 89th Floor.”

People muttered in awe.

Lee Chan-yong.

He was in the Easy Difficult, but he was the closest one to the 100th Floor.

He was the player who became increasingly active ever since the news about the outside world being in danger became known to the people in the Tutorial.

He was held up in an obsession to return quickly to the reality, desperate to return to family outside.

Many people said it is not like other people don't have families outside and wondered why he was acting like that. However, Lee Chan-yong demonstrated his resolve with his actions.

When he started to make strive as the top floor player, the Order of Vigilance also started to actively support him.

Not only did they support him with equipment and potions, but the information that he needed for the higher floors were also obtained by the Order and analyzed.

Clearing the 100th Floor was not just for him.

The first challenger to clear the 100th Floor and get out to the reality was going to be our messenger.

It was our message that we were still alive in here.

Also, it was our message to tell the people outside that we will get out of here soon, and that they need to hold out just a little longer.

Chapter 65 - The Day Of The Great Harmony

(5)

“Before Big Bro Chan-yong clears 100th Floor and leaves the Tutorial, let’s check the messages for him to carry to the outside world.”

This was necessary because communication between the Tutorial and the outside world was only flowing in one direction.

We could obtain new information from newbies arriving at the First Floor, but we could not deliver any information outside.

The people outside were not even aware of our existence.

If things were normal, they may have felt that something was off because people would routinely going missing. However, the reality outside consisted of monsters running amok.

The government and media were completely oblivious about the hundred people going missing every month.

“First, the list of names of the players inside the Tutorial and the messages for their families. These are must-haves.”

“Right. We had been making the list of names since a while ago. We will also collect addresses and messages too soon.”

Delivering messages to the families were going to be of great help to the people inside the Tutorial and alleviate their worries.

“Also, we need to inform the Korean government of our existence and have our authority acknowledged.”

That sounded a little out of the blue and unnecessary. Having heard what Park Jung-ah said, everyone’s gazes focused on her.

“Authority?”

“The authority to make laws inside the Tutorial in addition to the authority to punish the people violating the law.”

“I am not sure. Do you think the government would give us such authorities?”

It was unlikely.

The Order of Vigilance was already functioning as the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

Also, they had firmly established themselves already.

However, would the government officially acknowledge our authority?

Instead of acknowledging us as an independent governing body inside the Tutorial, they'll probably try to absorb us into their own.

How? Will that be effective? There was no need to question such.

Such questions were not something the brass would think about.

“It won't be easy.”

After Kim Min-huk, many people voiced their opinions.

What would the government do? How would they treat us? How should we respond?

The tent was full of people muttering until Park Jun-ah spoke up.

“People are invited to the Tutorial at random. It does not matter if the person is a kindergartener or 80 old elder. It does not matter if the person is a senator or the president. There are no exceptions. Anyone who enters the tutorial has to follow our law. Otherwise, they will be punished just like others.”

Everyone thought about what she just said as the tent fell silent.

Um...

This is not just about being fair to everyone.

The rules of the Order had things like the following:

Those who do not acknowledge the Order's law will be punished.

Those who make their own laws and force them on others will be punished.

Those who make and consist in political parties numbering members of ten or more will be punished.

Combining these rules and what Park Jung-ah just said, I think I can think of the following underlying meaning.

If the Korean government do not acknowledge us and force their ways to us, that is in violation of our law.

So, the government outside will be punished.

Most of the punishment issued by the Order was, other than a few warnings, executions.

In other words, if someone from the government entered the Tutorial when the government had not acknowledged the Order yet, the Order would kill that person immediately.

It didn't matter if it was the president or some senator.

Um...

This is not a compromise. It was a threat using the Tutorial's special characteristic of random selection.

Personally, I think it may work out well.

People high up tend to be more serious when their own assess are on the line.

Still, this is too outrageous.

Everyone started voicing their opinions again, and the tent bustled with noise.

"Let's think about this problem later."

Having heard what I said, the atmosphere calmed at an instant, and we moved to the next topic.

They didn't actually calm down from Park Jung-ah's declaration. It was just that they had no choice but to go to the next topic.

They could not ignore me, so they just shut the hell up and moved on.

Tsk.

“What about the starting weapon?”

That was a good topic.

The probability of survival changed depending on the weapon selected at the beginning.

I thought about the college girl I met at the First Floor.

I couldn't quite remember her name. She picked a katana that was half the length of her own height.

It would have been hard for her to survive even in the Hard Difficulty. It might have been difficult even if it was at the Normal Difficulty.

“We need healers. At the moment, compared to other classes, we have too few healers. In each floor, we have one at most if any at all. Most of the time, there aren't any.”

This was definitely true, especially in easy and normal.

It was really, seriously bad.

After all, who was going to choose a skinny stick after getting kidnapped when told to choose a weapon to protect their lives?

It is no use even if we are to put a notification on the Community forum.

Most people get transported to the space to choose the weapon as soon as they see the message about it.

Like that, most people check the Community only after selecting the weapon.

If we tell the outside world about the existence of the Tutorial, tell them about how rare the healers are and how important they are, the number of healers may increase even if by a small margin.

“Of course, tell them not to choose healers in Hard and Hell Difficulties.”

It is difficult for someone to survive in Hard and Hell Difficulties during the early solo levels.

“Ah, now that we are talking about this, we need to make it so people cannot enter the Hell Difficulty.”

This was almost the end of the Round 14. However, Lee Hyung-jin and I were only two who survived through the First Floor.

Coming to the Hell Difficulty willingly after knowing about this place was no different from suicide.

I once thought about how it would be to have party members when I was at the Sixth Floor.

However, having thought about it for a very long time, I thought that having someone will only obstruct me instead of helping.

“That may not be a good idea in the long run.”

It was Kim Min-huk who spoke against the idea.

That was obvious.

He was the only one who would dare to speak up against me in this meeting.

“I am not sure. Even if we accumulate a lot of information and make a perfect guideline, the number of people clearing the Hell Difficulty will be extremely small. Entering the Hell Difficulty is no different than entering a slaughter house.”

“Um... Let’s think about this one later too.”

The meeting continued for a long time after that.

Everyone was noticeably tired from the long meeting.

Just when the meeting seemed to come to an end, Kim Min-huk brought up a new topic.

“I have one more important thing to talk about.”

Another one?

I’m exhausted.

Being trapped in a tent with a bunch of people mumbling and listening to conversations for hours is quite tiresome.

Idy was actually just lying on the floor, sleeping.

I envy her. I wish I could just sleep too.

“From the Manager of the Normal Difficulty, I heard that something is going to be held.”

We heard occasionally heard things like that from the Managers, so what he was talking about was not anything special.

“The problem is that this is not going to be another day of the great harmony.”

What?

“If it is not the day of the great harmony, then what is it?”

Until now, all information regarding something being held had always been about the day of the great harmony.

“I don’t know that yet. I need to find out for now. For a while, all members of the Order should focus on gathering information about this after clearing a stage.”

“What about information for Big Bro Chan-yong?”

“We should collect information for him and this.”

Oh my. This is going to be tight.

Of the members of the Order, only high-ranking players were exempt from information collection duty. This is because they needed to gather information of their own levels to progress.

Still, I should get information whenever I get the chance.

The conversation about this mysterious event went on for a while under speculation.

I didn’t usually speak much, but I started to frequently join in the

discussions until my mouth was literally dry.

“Well then, we will conclude the meeting here. If you have additional comments or questions about what we discussed today, please let us know through the captain or vice-captain of each difficulty. As for all vice-captains, please do not forget the reports for the floors you are in charge of. All right. Thank you all for the hard work.”

Along with her declaration, the meeting was formally concluded.

The people heading outside had bright looks on their faces, probably because the strenuous meeting was over. It must be nice to be them.

However, the three Captains including myself and Park Jung-ah, who was the Commander, remained inside the tent.

“Well then, I’ll get going too.”

“Hey, Commander, please wait a bit. I need to talk to you.”

Park Jung-ah was getting up from her seat. However, Park Jong-sik stopped her from leaving.

There is one more important matter left.

I need to join the discussion regarding this matter.

Unfortunately that is...

“Yes, I understand. What is it?”

“Uh... Um. The thing is... Hey, Min-huk. You tell her.”

Park Jong-sik opened his mouth and tried to answer. However, as if he thought it was a bother, he handed it over to Kim Min-huk.

I understood his feelings very well.

When it comes to the job that involves opening one's mouth, asking Kim Min-huk to do the talking is the most convenient way to handle things.

“It's nothing special. Commander, we have something to discuss regarding the problem with your attitude.”

“Attitude?”

In actuality, there was no need to worry about her attitude when it came to how she dealt with people.

She was not rude to people, nor did she try to pressure people into doing what she wanted using her position.

She was just very stiff like a machine. She was cold to people.

She did give hell to the members of the Order occasionally. Even so, she was just yapping away about the faults and mistakes and didn't use violence.

Although she did mix in some swearing in the process lately...

She never once criticized anyone without a good reason. Moreover, she worked hard to be considerate to the members of the Order. Considering those, her attitude was not to the extent of being a problem.

In fact, her approval rating within the Order was quite high.

To begin with, the Order of Vigilance was established by her and her supporters as the core members.

“I'm talking about how you treat Captain Lee Ho-jae.”

The problem was that Park Jung-ah, who was the Commander, treated me as if I held a higher rank.

Damn it. If this problem had nothing to do with me, I would have gone outside and rested for a bit.

Actually, I am higher ranked than her, in terms of age difference.

However, inside the Tutorial, we don't decide ranking on age.

There are a few reasons why the situation came to this.

First, when the Tutorial first appeared, most of the people who led the scene through the Community were in early 20s or late 10s; the young people.

Most of the communication were done through the Community.

Also, people were gradually becoming superhuman as they progressed through Tutorial, which made age meaningless.

Finally, the Commander of the Order of Vigilance, the organization that practically ruled and maintained the people inside Tutorial, was a young high schooler.

Time passed and Park Jung-ah was now 20 years old. However, that still didn't change the fact that she was young.

In addition to that, the Order of Vigilance forbid deciding the ranks based on age a while ago.

To be precise, the Order made a law to forbidding the usage metrics including age to differentiate people and rank them.

The Order fundamentally hated emergence of class differences among the people.

The Order wanted all people inside the Tutorial to be equal. Only the Order of Vigilance, the management group, and the executioners existed separately.

Given what the Order of Vigilance was and what it represented, it was a really big problem that Park Jung-ah treated me as a superior.

It could endanger the leveled social structure and create a power hierarchy, placing me on the top with the Order placed right below and the rest thereafter.

Even if it does not come to that, it could appear to be like that from an outside perspective. That alone would negatively affect the public opinion about the Order of Vigilance.

Besides this problem, there was the problem within the Order of Vigilance.

It is true that I took a big part in the establishment of the Order. It's also true that I am the strongest bastard.

If Park Jung-ah treats me as a superior, the organization's command structure will falter.

Even now, there probably are many people who think I have the highest authority, rather than Park-Jung-ah.

Whenever Park Jung-ah and I have a collision of opinions, there will be people who would see it as a power struggle between us and mumble about it amongst others.

If factions develops within the Order, it would be very bothersome.

“Um... Well. The bottom line is that you should relax when you are interacting with Captain Lee Ho-jae. Actually, it would be good too if you treated him as your subordinate.”

“Yes? Me? To Captain Lee Ho-jae?”

Park Jung-ah’s face paled in panic. She had the exact same face as a servant who was asked to physically punish the emperor’s son.

The root of the problem was that Park Jung-ah still saw me as a gracious brave hero straight out of some fairy tale.

Honestly, it is uncomfortable to the point of physical pain.

It’s uncomfortable for me to keep my mouth shut and put up a serious, dignified face whenever she’s around.

Her excessive expectations and respect make me uneasy.

Moreover, I feel like her tendencies are getting worse.

Kim Min-huk yapped away for a long time about why Park Jung-ah should be more relaxed toward me.

After his logical and boring lecture, Park Jung-ah soon agreed.

“Okay then. Try talking to him casually.”

Park Jong-sik, who was dozing off while the lecture was in full swing, casually tossed out the question.

“... Captain Lee Ho-jae... Sir?”

Why is her face turning completely red?

“Skip the formality. Try calling him more casually. Think of him as a town’s fool.”

Park Jong-sik tripped the conversation over with an uninterested tone.

Think of me as a fool? Isn’t that going too far?

“Captain Lee... Lee Ho-jae? ... Please keep up the good work as always.”

“Don’t be so polite. Try again.”

Park Jong-sik snickered.

It was very strange to see Park Jung-ah's face tomato-red and stuttering when she had always been calm and emotionless.

She once delivered a speech in front of several hundred people while drenched in blood, and she did so without shaking. Now, she was embarrassed to talk. Certainly, this was a rare sight.

Seeing her acting like this is.... um... Adorable?

It seemed Park Jong-sik and Kim Min-huk had similar impressions. They were watching, quietly snickering at her expressions.

With great difficulty, Park Jung-ah managed to lock her wandering eyes, which were rocketing from the ceiling, the floor, and my face. She said again,

“Captain Lee Ho-jae... Keep up the good work... as always.”

The power of it all was incredible!

A pretty girl was looking at me in the eyes while blushing and saying a line like that. I was really feeling it in my heart.

It's making me embarrassed for some reason.

Park Jong-sik covered his mouth to pretend he was yawning, while while Kim Min hyuk laughed quietly at me while staying out of Park Jung-ah's field of view.

By any chance, is my face red too? It's not, right?

It better not be red.

“Keruk. Keruk.”

I thought Idy was asleep. However, she was making a “Keruk” sound from the side.

“You are still too polite. Again. Again.”

Now, this guy was just really excited about this whole process. Energetically, Park Jong-sik asked Park Jung-ah to try again.

Chapter 66 - The Day Of The Great Harmony

(6)

With that, all matters we had to address during the day of the great harmony were handled.

The meeting was concluded well, and it seems the thing about Park Jung-ah sufficiently resolved.

We fixed her attitude problem. However, having witnessed her human side alone was worth the trouble.

Honestly, Park Jung-ah treated people too stiffly and with a machine-like manner. There were times when she gave the creeps.

She was calm and unaffected when she blew up a criminal's head with a handgun out of vengeance.

As an organization's commander, being able to always maintain and iron-blooded attitude was definitely a plus.

However, if her attitude was approaching the point of inhumane, the people around her would not want to trust her and follow her.

Park Jung-ah decided she will consciously try not to treat me as someone above her.

She promised us that she will cut down on respectful language as

much as possible and treat me like a familiar friend.

However, in reality, instead of relaxing her attitude, she started to act even more uncomfortably around me.

She was acting strange. She slowly turned her head to the side when our eyes met. She stopped halfway when trying to talk to me about something, and just muttered a few things then dismissed it instead of actually saying what was on her mind.

Also, like just now, she just ran away to avoid me.

She is acting this way because she is feeling awkward.

When she gets use to it, we will be able to get along more comfortably.

On a side note, Idy was pissed, which was a problem.

It seemed that I bored her too much during the meeting.

She was not capable of understanding what anyone else was saying.

She could only communicate with me.

When she was like that, I didn't tend to her at all throughout the

entire day. I could understand why she was pissed.

To make her feel better, I went to talk to her for a bit. However, Idy turned her back on me and lied down.

She said she was going to sleep so I should stop bothering her.

It seemed she was very disappointed.

Only Idy, Kim Min-huk and myself were in the tent now.

Park Jong-sik left when Park Jung-ah left the tent.

I turned to look at Kim Min-huk, and he was doing something strange.

“What are you doing?”

“Can’t you tell?”

He had a piece of wood in one hand and a carving knife in the other hand.

He was making something by carving the wood with the knife.

“In the end, have you decided to walk the path of the Legendary Moonlight Sculptor?”

“What the hell are you talking about? I’m just doing it for fun. A hobby.”

A hobby, huh...

In the past, I had dabbled on knitting scarfs and socks and making gloves and outwears for fun.

Ah, I also made a hat too.

I opened the inventory, and the clothing that I made before were still there.

“Hey. Are you the sewing type? Sculpting is better. Sculpting Swordsmanship Skill is like a cheat.”

“That’s the main character’s special boost ability. From the common sense standpoint, a sewing skill is better. By the way, why are you sculpting all of sudden? Are you bored?”

I started sewing things when I was mentally cornered and exhausted.

I started when I was raising my resistance skills by purposefully inflicting harm on my body first thing in the morning.

Back then, I was all alone and unaware that I could meet other

people through the day of the great harmony like this.

One day, the pain became the only stimulant in my life. I start to feel something like pleasures through intense pain.

When I had been snickering as I inflicted harm on my body, I hoped my Pain Resistance Skill would not improve any further.

I was concerned my life would become dull as well if my ability to feel pain became dull.

I started to mumble on my own more often. I obsessively focused on causing self-harm.

It was not just for the goal of increasing my passive skills. I was making it more painful and doing it in more dangerous ways.

One day, I came to realize that my behaviors were excessively dangerous and the condition of my mind was not normal.

I was suffering from a mental illness.

I could not escape from Tutorial, so I came up with three options.

They were not anything big.

First, I decided to look at the Community regularly at a certain

time every day.

Even when I was not curious about anything, I watched people have conversations.

Second, I decided to have daily routines.

The last thing was getting a hobby.

While I enjoyed my hobby time, I forgot about everything regarding Tutorial, skills, growths or levels. I just focused on sewing.

Now that I am thinking about it, all three were pretty effective.

“... You also went through a lot. No. What you went through goes beyond that. My situation is nothing like that. I got a house at the 30th Floor’s residential district, but I got nothing to decorate the inside, so I am making them myself.”

It’s expensive to buy things using points.

Kim Min-huk added.

A house huh...

I have heard that you could purchase homes and lands with

points at the 30th Floor's residential district and use them as your private residence.

A house.

Um... Well. That's nice.

Although I am not envious of him.

“Just call that friend of yours named Lee Jun-sik or Lee Jun-suk again. I'm going to increase my passive resistance.”

“All right.”

Kim Min-huk responded, briefly yawned and opened the message window.

“By the way, are you not going outside?”

“What's the point of talking to the people outside? I'll just end up with more work to handle. I'd rather stay here until the day of the great harmony ends. What about you? Why aren't you going outside?”

“This is my tent, you rascal.”

Honestly, I don't feel comfortable meeting other people outside

either.

There are too many people who are afraid of me.

*

“Ihaoi continent?”

“Yes. Can you get information about that before the round ends?”

“Yes... I can, but...”

While we were taking a break, I asked Lee Jun-suk to gather information about the Ihaoi continent at the 12th Floor stage.

Lee Jun-suk was a member of Order who was exempt from information gathering duty.

The reason for exemption was to allow him to focus on gathering information for clearing stages.

He needs information for himself, so I cannot ask him to do an unreasonable amount of intelligence work.

“What’s your Mana Circuit Skill level now?”

“I’m at level three...”

That’s perfect.

He is exactly at the point where mana operation gets even more delicate.

“Here. Try wearing this.”

I brought out a bracelet and gave it to Lee Jun-suk.

“I got this as a reward after clearing the Tenth Floor. Its additional attribute increases your Mana Circuit level by one. This item is at a whole another dimension from items you can get from the store. Try it on first. I’ll explain afterwards.”

Just wearing this leather mana bracelet made the wearer’s Mana Circuit level higher by one level.

A person’s Mana Circuit level indicated how skillfully and smoothly the user could operate the mana.

However, the operation method is something that the user has to learn without other’s help.

Things like swordsmanship or spear techniques are something that even non-experts can get a bit of sense for it.

Perhaps it should be swung this way. Doing it like this is making the stance better? Like that.

However, mana operation didn't have things like that.

It was like bashing one's own head to the floor all alone to learn.

Also, because of that, this Mana Bracelet was even more precious.

Even if it was through the power of the item, being able to experience the mana operation that's a level higher was still worth it.

“Like that, when you accumulate enough experience, your skill's level will go up to four in no time. After that, because of the bracelet's effect, your Mana Circuit will be at level 5. If you work a little harder after that, your skill level will rise to five. Like that, it will keep going up. Does it make sense?”

Lee Jun-suk repeatedly nodded.

“It's sick, right?”

“Yes.”

“Deal?”

“Yes! Deal.”

All right, that went well.

Actually, the Mana Circuit training won't go as well as I described.

Separate from the experience, he will have to work hard, very hard.

The bracelet is like reducing the effort required from 100% to 80%.

“I'm giving this to you because you seemed to be the most talented one of all kids out there. Ah, do not tell others about this.”

Actually, I didn't know much about Lee Jun-suk before I met him today. However, I tossed this comment out just for the sake of it.

Lee Jun-suk's face looked a step brighter. He started to really focus on using the skill.

Meanwhile, Kim Min-huk stared at me as if he was accusing me of selling snake oils.

“Ah, I need to meet Hyung-jin too. Can you come with me later and talk to him?”

“The one who is in Hell Difficulty, Third Floor?”

“Yes. I don’t think he is in a good condition.”

I explained to Kim Min-huk about the conversation that I had with Lee Hyung-jin and the Third Floor in Hell Difficulty.

“I am not sure. I don’t think talking to him is going to resolve this problem. I think letting him be is sufficient.”

“Is that so?”

“You can only console him, but it won’t really feel close to home for him since you got through the Third Floor with great ease.”

I did.

I got through it in just two or three days.

“Instead, try letting him be for now.”

Okay.

I sent the thought of talking to Lee Hyung-jin far far away beyond the outer bounds of my mind.

When it comes to dealing with people, it is better to listen to Kim

Min-huk's opinion.

Actually, I wouldn't know what to say to Lee Hyun-jin when I meet him. It's a bother too, so...

Well then... What should I do now?

Kim Min-huk turned his gaze back and worked diligently on sculpting the piece of wood as I watched him.

“Hey.”

“What? Can't you see that I'm focused on my work?”

“I'm bored.”

“... Hey. Jun-suk. Do you have a stronger skill?”

*

The day of the great harmony ended. The end of Round 14 was also right in front of my nose.

I grew fond of my home here through the past month of stay. However, it was time for me to say goodbye.

Home.

It's the cave that I had been using as the camp site in the 12th Floor stage.

I had been calling it home all this time, and now it really feels like home.

The grass outside the cave is well organized. It looks like a garden in front of a home. There is even an outhouse built at a distance from cave.

The home's inside is tidied up, with household items and cooking utensils are also well organized in a corner.

The trace of decorations and organization that Idy had done whenever she had the time could be seen here and there.

This place really does look like a home.

“Don't you think so?”

“Keruk. I feel the same.”

I used to live in a studio room before entering the Tutorial. However, even that place didn't give me this kind of sensation.

Back then, my home felt like a prison where I was trapped in.

Could it be that Idy also feel the same way?

“Keruk. I am a little different, Captain. To me, this place really is my first home that I got to have.”

She said it casually, so I wondered if I could ask her for a detailed story.

Would that be rude?

No. It is not a matter of being rude or not. It might be a memory that would hurt her if I made her think about it.

Before I could start worrying about her, she started to tell me the story about her past.

“I did not get to live with my kind. I always lived at a forest nearby, alone. Because of how things were there, I didn’t get to have a place like this cave with adequate necessities. Every night, I had to move to different places and sleep.”

... There is one thing that comes to my mind whenever I hear her story.

What exactly was the reason why she was shunned by other lizardmen?

I don't feel comfortable asking though...

“Also, the Tutorial stage, the place which I am not even certain of my memories about, cannot be called my home. It was no different than a prison. You brought me out of that place. Captain, I am thankful.”

Brought you out of that place...

Is that the right way to put it?

I once asked Kiri Kiri.

If another player meets Idy at the Fifth Floor's boss room, does that Idy know me?

Is that Idy that I have summoned before?

Kiri Kiri's explanation was like this.

She said Idy that I summoned and Idaltaru at the Fifth Floor's boss room are the same but also different.

She said that the Idaltaru that another player would meet at the boss room will not have the memory of ever meeting me.

She also said that it is not that Idaltaru lost the memoires of me,

but it is that she never met me.

Idy was confused when she heard that answer.

Ever since then, instead of calling her Idaltaru, I called her Idy.

I suddenly felt frustrated.

I wanted to say something to comfort her, but I could not think of anything to say.

The convoluted feeling persisted inside me. Meanwhile, many messages appeared in front of my eyes.

[You failed clearing the 12th Floor in Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your status abnormalities and wounds will be healed.]

[An additional reward is given based on your play record.]

[You acquired Poison Lv.1]

I thought it would give me more points. However, I unexpectedly got a skill instead.

Save for me failing to clear the stage, my play record was perfect.

I secured my survival for 25 days of stay inside the stage during the beginning. I had been leisurely spending the time and training since then.

“Keruk. Are we going to be at the waiting room for the three days? It’s not bad.”

“No. We will be at the waiting room for nine days.”

To be precise, we will be at the waiting room for the three days and in front of the bonfire for the other six days.

“Keruk? Six additional days in the waiting room? If you do, you won’t be able to clear the floor, isn’t that right?”

“That’s right. I plan on challenging the 12th Floor multiple times. I don’t want to let this opportunity pass and just go to the next floor. A perfect training opportunity like this may not come again.”

I have plenty of time. Suitable prey for hunting roam around the jungle alone. I don’t have to bother with finding something, nor do I have to stop a cataclysmic event either.

More importantly,

“I should hunt those fake dragons before leaving.

Chapter 67 - Tutorial 60th Floor (Part 7)

Ujuk Ujuk...

Yong Yong was sitting on my lap and eating a cheese steak as I stroke Yong Yong's head and sigh.

“Yong Yong.”

Yong Yong turned his head to the back and lightly tilted.

It means he was asking why I called.

“Instead of steaks, would you like to try this fairy worm? Hey, this is super good for your body. Your daddy will even apply honey on it for you.”

Yong Yong shook its head and instead focused back on the steak.

This rascal isn't selective with food like an elementary school kid.

Yong Yong just wanted to try eating the steak that I was eating.

This rascal always mimics what I do, eating what I eat, sleeping where I sleep, sitting where I sit, sighing just like me and smiling just like me.

Sometimes, to mimic how I am looking at the Community, Yong Yong stares at an empty space and pretends to read something.

So, this was why Yong Yong was eating the steak lunch box that I usually enjoyed eating instead of the fairy worm.

What should I do...

I never thought that I'd agonize over Yong Yong being picky with food.

Ugh... You have no idea how much trouble I went through to prepare those fairy worms.

You have no idea how precious they are...

My solution was to eat the fairy worm.

If I eat the fairy worm, Yong Yong will eat it by mimicking me.

However, isn't that a little wrong?

If Yong Yong doesn't want to eat it, then that's that.

I sighed again and gently brushed Yong Yong's forehead.

Well, it is not like eating steak is going to lead to an upset stomach.

Yong Yong may be a puppy-sized baby, but a dragon is still a dragon.

I'm just upset that I'm unable to feed Yong Yong a healthier food.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Anything new?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: How could there be any? I spent the whole day putting Yong Yong to sleep and feeding and teaching him.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Wait... Yong Yong is that hatchling?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Yeah. Why?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Oh my... What kind of lunatic names a hatchling [Yong Yong](#)!]

[TL: In Korean, Yong is the pronunciation for the word "dragon." Saying it twice in a row like that sounds rather adorable than fearsome like a dragon should be.]

What do you mean? Here is one who did.

Besides, who else is going to name the hatchling?

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: If other dragons heard that name, they will try to kill you for insulting their kind. Do you understand, Big Bro?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: It's all right. I can beat them.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: No. That's not the problem! Ugh, really!]

Hey, why are you getting worked up again?

Even though this is just a message window, her frustration oozes out as if this is a live, face-to-face conversation.

Her personality is getting rougher and rougher. She is one wild woman.

I think I'd totally fall for her wild side.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Instead of saying ridiculous things... Does the hatchling not hate the name? No matter how young the hatchling is, there is no way a dragon would like that kind of name.]

Of course, Yong Yong does not hate the name.

Hating one's own name? Who would? Right, Yong Yong?

Yong Yong haphazardly swallowed the steak and closed the mouth. His teeth chomped down and made a noise.

The small wings that were folded on the back opened wide. The wings were still small even when opened wide.

After that, Yong Yong slowly turned the head left and right.

Hey, why are you putting on such a serious face and telling me you hate it?

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: See? I knew it. Before the dragon becomes rebellious after getting bigger, make a proper name. No, wait for a bit. Instead of letting you handle it, I'll just make the name. You said the dragon's color is silver, right?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Right. It's a silver dragon.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: By the way, how does this hatchling cry? Making the name similar to the sound of its cry might work too?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: This dragon does not cry.]

Really.

I was baffled by this.

I thought an adult dragon would roar like ‘kurwara’ and a baby dragon would cry like ‘kulkulkul.’

This rascal didn’t cry at all.

Yong Yong expressed itself most through body languages. Lately, Yong Yong had been speaking human tongue instead.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Your dragon can talk? Already?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Yeah. The pronunciation is a little short-tongued, but...]

“I am not short-tongued.”

Yong Yong was reading the message too. Having realized what I said, Yong Yong protested.

“Not short-tongued.”

Yong Yong’s eyes widened as if I just revealed the biggest secret behind his birth. I stroke his back as I continued to read the message.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Um. Now that I’m trying to come up with one, I can’t think of any. Please wait for a bit. I’ll go ask others too.]

Like that, a contest for making a name for Yong Yong was commenced.

The prize was a bottle of elixir.

The participants included everyone in the Korean server.

*

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Lee Shin. Lee is the family name and Shin is the name. It's pretty good, right? It is distinctively Korean too.]

What do you think?

Yong Yong shook his head left and right.

“What do you not like about the name?”

“[It's too shot](#).”

[PR Note: The author's trying to give onto Yong Yong's short-tongued pronunciation, hence 'shot' instead of 'short'. It appears a few more times in this chapter, so just use context.]

... I see.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: He said he does not like the name because it is too short. Try finding a longer name.]

So, he doesn't like short, one syllable name?

In that case, simple names like Guri, Gyuri, and Khan are automatically disqualified.

I think those names are good for him because they sound cute.

“I am not cut.”

Is that so?

In that case, are you not cute but mighty and forceful?

“Yep.”

You sure are.

“All right. All right. My Yong Yong, you are not cute. You are mighty.”

I praised him, and Yong Yong happily nudged his head on my arm.

See? You are fricking adorable.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Raokones. How about that one?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Hey, that name... [I think I've heard of that name from somewhere](#). That one is a little...]

[TL: 라오코네스, Raokones is the name of a dragon from a famous Korean fantasy novel, Polaris Rhapsody, written by the Lee Young-doo. He is the author of Dragon Raja, another famous fantasy novel.]

I sent the message and looked at Yong Yong. His eyes gleamed and looked at me expectantly.

“Yong Yong.”

Yong Yong energetically nodded.

“You like the name, Raokones?”

He nodded energetically again.

All right. He says he likes the name, so what can I do.

It is better than [Amurtat](#).

[TL: 아무르타트, Amurtat is the name of an evil dragon from Dragon Raja.]

Like that, we renamed Yong Yong's to Raokones. I was in middle of showing Yong Yong how to write the name Raokones when another message came.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: How about Nafplion? I heard the name means a sailor.]

I think I've heard this name from somewhere too.

I lowered my head to look at Yong Yong. His eyes were sparkling once again.

"... Of the two, which one do you like better?"

"Buth."

*

... The whole thing made a strange turn.

Yong Yong liked any name that was lengthy.

The problem was that Yong Yong refused to give up the potential name candidates that came up.

He wanted to use them all as his name.

Hence, his name became:

“Benedictus Raylisia Piakhan Raokones Nafplion Nistiamat Karusearin Valakas Shyanso Karuddanthes Nesaria the Third.”

It was a very long name that was very difficult to pronounce. Having heard the name, Yong Yong was jumping up and down the table overjoyed.

Since he is so happy about the name, it does not feel right to cut it down short.

Still, what’s the Third for? The Third?

Are you saying there is a First and a Second with that exact ridiculous name?

What the hell.

Now this name is definitely the kind that the dragons will get infuriated at and accuse me of trying to ridicule the dragons.

Still, well...

Yong Yong was rolling around overjoyed. Watching him being so happy warmed my heart.

Does having a name you like make you feel that happy?

He was in the state of pure bliss.

“Now, Yong Yong, open your mouth.”

While he was happy, I placed in a fairy worm inside Yong Yong’s mouth.

Yong Yong didn’t complain much. He smiled like a fool, chewed, and swallowed the fairy worm.

Ah, you are eating so well, my beautiful son.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Well, if the hatchling likes the name, then it is fine.]

This lass’ personality used to be different...

Perhaps it was because she had known me for so long. She was now soaked in a lifestyle of mediocre satisfaction.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: What did he say? Do you have a moment? I have something I want to talk to you about.]

I checked the message and directed my gaze at Yong Yong.

Yong Yong was rolling around on the table while clutching his full belly.

He was widely grinning as if he was still very happy about the new name.

Well, Yong Yong just finished eating too, so...

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I have time. What is it?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: It's about Lee Jun-suk. It's about time for that rascal to leave the Tutorial, but he has no intention of doing so. You try talking to him. He listens to you the most.]

That's true.

Um... Actually, the matter with Lee Jun-suk is a little complicated.

It had already been many years since he reached the 90th Floor and he's since declared that he will repeat the 91st Floor to focus on growing further.

I could understand it back then.

He had the desire to become stronger than anyone before clearing the 100th Floor and going back to the reality.

I understood him back then.

I cheered him on and told him various know-hows when he stayed at the 90th Floor and focused on growing stronger.

Like that, a few years passed.

I was staying where I was because I could not clear the 61st Floor, leaving me no choice. However, Lee Jun-suk was staying at the 90th Floor voluntarily.

This rascal is definitely not normal either.

He was one of the greatest talents in Tutorial.

He is not from the Round One like I am, but he entered the Tutorial during its early days.

He is in the Hard Difficulty, and showed great proficiency in clearing stages, which was the reason why the Order of Vigilance provided him with support.

A guy like that had been staying at the 90th Floor for years, saying he wants to become stronger.

No matter how I look at it, he is already the strongest.

He would be the greatest masterpiece ever produced by the Korean Tutorial server.

He is unprecedented. Plus, another Awakened warrior like him will not appear in the future frequently.

However, Lee Jun-suk is still staying at the 90th Floor.

At this point, his goal is becoming obvious to me.

He is not just trying to become stronger. He has a specific goal.

Also, I am the only one who is likely to be the part of the goal. I am the only player who is stronger than Lee Jun-suk.

It is a stupid idea.

He cannot compare himself to me.

Um...

This is not just about Lee Jun-suk.

He is a part of the management in the Order of Vigilance.

Moreover, he has a contract with the Korean government.

The Korean government had been expecting him to come out of the Tutorial soon. However, this Hard Difficulty's Awakened warrior hasn't for years.

I think they must be pretty anxious.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I got it. I'll try talking to him.]

Um... What should I say to him?

The fact that Kim Min-huk left the Tutorial is making things difficult to a bone-cutting degree.

He took care of things like these on his own when we asked.

What should I do to convince him to leave willingly?

Let's think about this first.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: How about telling him the nice things he will have when he gets out?]

You think he doesn't know about those?

He knows better than we do.

It seems Yong Yong became sleepy while I was talking to Jung-ah. He was sleeping on my lap. I gently brushed the top of Yong Yong and organized my thoughts. However, I suddenly felt my mana was making strange movements.

A part of my mana was out of control. It was leaking out of my body.

Damn it. I was fine for a while.

I'll have to acknowledge that I let my guard down too much.

I have thought about too many keywords repeatedly.

Outside, Reality, Power, Identity, Growth, Happiness, Kim Min-huk, Park Jung-ah...

I cannot suppress the mana flowing out from my entire body.

It is already out of control.

Instead of blocking the mana's path, the wiser course of action is directing the mana to a place and collecting it.

I cast barrier on Yong Yong.

After that, I raised my right hand that I was using to brush Yong

Yong.

The mana that was violently shaking inside my body slowly collected toward my right hand, which was raised above my head.

Uuuuuuung...

The building's wall cracked and the ceiling came down.

The power was incredible. It could destroy everything around me just from having it collected on my hand.

The entire residential area at the 60th Floor was shaking just from the mana's movement.

To direct the power, I rotated the mana in a specific trajectory.

The mana collected on my hand slowly started to calm down.

It will gradually dissipate with passage of time.

I looked down, and Yong Yong was looking at me anxiously.

"It's all right."

Handling the mana that came out of my body is a simple task.

The problem is what comes next.

Just like mana, which shook off my control and exploded out, the emotions I had hidden underneath surfaced to my consciousness.

I do not like the current situation where I'm calmly sitting at a chair.

I do not like feeling happy looking at Yong Yong either.

I absolutely hate this damn waiting. It's making my body ache.

I want to move. I want to get up. I want to get out. I want to fight, destroy, win, lose, kill and die.

I don't want to be stuck here like this forever.

I closed my eyes and thought about my emotions.

There were numerous emotions in my mind. I turned them into images.

Boiling lava...

[A nuclear fusion reactor at the brink of explosion.](#)

[TL: I'm sure most of readers probably know this, but I'm going

to say it anyway. Nuclear fusion reactors cannot have runaway reactions. As soon as the reactions become unstable, the reactions stop because it cannot sustain the condition needed to continue, shutting down the reactor.]

Anything will do.

My emotions were burning in red, boiling and on the verge of exploding. I poured cold water on to my emotions.

I poured another batch of cold water on them, followed by cement and then some more cement.

Like that, I closed the lid on my emotions.

Yong Yong was awake, but he fell back to sleep. It was around this time when I was able to finally close the lid completely.

After that, I sent my emotions back to a place far down below.

Although I cooled the emotions and sent them down, the icky feeling still remained.

I sang a song.

“Now... I cannot hold on anymore... With a big smile...”

I was singing off key. Because it was unpleasant to hear, Yong Yong was awakened again, and he complained. However, I could not stop singing at the moment. I could not afford to.

The inside of the building looked like an aftermath of a disaster. I sat inside the building and sang a song like that

Chapter 68 - Tutorial 12th Floor (7)

[Can't you tell me about this first?]

[Ugh. I understand weapons and armors, but I should have packed some undergarments... If it is going to last a month, I'll have period to deal with too...]

*

[Round 15, Day 0, 00:15]

The first thing I did when I entered the waiting room was check my newly acquired skills.

[Poison Energy (Lv.1)]

Description: Endows materialized mana with poison; a status ailment effect.

It was a simple skill, but it was also a good skill. Very good, in fact.

Regardless of what I swing, let it be my hand or a weapon, as long as it is wrapped in mana, it is going to apply poison.

Isn't this too useful?

Its performance will vary depending on the poison's effectiveness, but... Wait, I bet the poison's effectiveness will increase with skill level.

Um...

There are so many ways to utilize this.

My greatest strength is my speed.

I have so many skills related to speed and my agility stats were on the high side.

Speed means being able to strike preemptively. Plus, with Blink and the Wind Spirit's Blessing, I can always run away from a fight.

Unless several hundred or thousand enemies surround me in a large formation like the 12th Floor's orangutans, catching me is almost impossible.

If poison is added to the mix of skills...

I just need to poison the enemy and run.

If the enemy does not have a way to eliminate the poison, the enemy will die from the poison.

Even if the enemy does not die, I should be able to kill it easily after the poison weakens the enemy.

Aren't the uses of this skill practically limitless?

Increasingly petty and conniving ideas kept on forming in my mind.

“Keruk. It would be good for you to not rely on such methods.”

“What are you talking about? It's all good as long as I win.”

“You are strong enough without having have to resort to such methods.”

I get what you are saying, but...

Honestly, these underhanded methods and tactics really suit me.

I am like that when it comes to battles at least.

I was always like this since my days as a professional gamer.

Instead of a heavy-handed frontal duel against the opponent, I

always preferred exposing a gap in the opponent's defense and shaking their mentality.

Instead of ending the game with a blazing and glorious battle, I liked winning safely even if it was through underhanded methods.

Of course, when I had the upper hand in strength, I would engage in an upfront fight.

Doing so had fewer variables.

“Keruk. Captain, if you correct that devious side of you in battles, you would really be perfect.”

Hey, like I said before, being devious is not a bad thing.

I think that's enough of checking skills. Let's think about what to do from now on.

Normally, failing to clear the stage gives you something like a small amount of points or ordinary items.

However, I received Poison Energy, a new skill, after failing to clear the 12th Floor.

It meant that as far as the play records are concerned, I practically cleared it.

It might actually mean my play record was even better.

I went beyond just surviving in the jungle. I established a clear territory for myself and perfectly secured shelter and food.

I spent the remaining time on improving myself, so this could be considered as having exceeded floor's objective.

If that is the case, will I be able to obtain more skills easily from each round by repeating the 12th Floor?

Skills I get as additional rewards are usually handy.

Most of the power skills I have are from additional rewards.

This is an intriguing possibility.

If I can gain ten useful skills from the 12th Floor, I don't think I'd be having hard time clearing future floors.

Moreover, I really liked the lifestyle of 12th Floor stage.

The place was optimized for focusing on growth. Also, the foods that Idy cooked were delicious.

The cave was comfortable to stay in, and it was far better than staying inside the desolate confine of the waiting room.

I could lead a refreshing lifestyle; even better, I could even comfortably obtain skills while at it.

Isn't that just perfect?

“Keruk. Captain. Do not forget the time limit on the Dead Summon.”

Um... Certainly, Idy does disappear when the time limit is up.

Also, I only have three more chances left for the Dead Summoning.

Without Idy, I wouldn't be able to guarantee my comfortable lifestyle at the 12th Floor.

My bones ache at the thought of it.

Still, it is fortunate that the Dead Summon's duration is quite long.

At minimum, the summoning will last through the next round, guaranteeing a smooth clear of the 12th Floor.

Let's just try it out first.

I have to try hunting the bogus dragons anyway.

It does not matter if I don't acquire any more useful skills from this.

Making a place to stay at the 12th Floor and comfortably spending time on development is more than good enough on its own.

“Keruk. As for me, there is nothing bad worth complaining about. I even have a home on the 12th Floor.”

When we go there again, that home will no longer be there.

The cave will still be there, but it will just be a cave where that weasel monster lives.

“It does not matter. I just need to create another one.”

That's true.

It looked like Idy really liked that home.

Now, well then.

I don't have anything in particular to do until the waiting time expires, so let's try the poison skill.

It's been a while since I inflicted self-harm.

*

“Captain, you really are insane.”

“You aren't hesitant about saying that. Others would be hurt from hearing that kind of words.”

“Still, it is the truth, Keruk.”

It hurts even more because it is the truth.

Violence through facts... Don't you know?

“I don't know. Keruk.”

During the nine days of the waiting period, I tried many experiments.

How to apply poison energy on mana...

How to use the poison energy afterwards...

After completing experiments on how to use the energy, I tested

its power.

Well, this is obvious, but the subject was my own body.

Because of the Great Poison Resistance skill and the waiting room's auto healing effect, I struggled through the experiment.

The Poison Energy's skill was at level 1. Using it to break through the poison resistance skill and the waiting room's healing effects to cause harm on my body was no easy task.

I tried to find a way, but I couldn't think of a good idea.

So, I went on grinding as usual.

Throughout the day, I used mana wrapped with poison energy to poke at my palm as I sat down.

I had the Focused Effort skill, which increased the growth rate of the skill, allowing the Poison Energy skill to grow quickly.

[You acquired Poison Energy Lv. 4]

[You acquired Great Poison Resistance Lv.3]

These definitely were significant results.

It was not like I was inside a stage that accelerated the skill growth. I got this kind of result from inside the waiting room.

Although I had been very diligent about harming myself, this result would have been absolutely impossible without the Focused Effort skill.

After the period of three days in the waiting room ended, as I got to spend time at the bonfire, the growth rate increased exponentially.

As I thought, the growth rate at the waiting room is noticeably slower.

The growth rate at the bonfire room is also by far lacking in comparison to being inside a stage.

Anyway, dear God of Slowness, you are the best.

[God of Adventure is disappointed.]

It seemed someone was complaining somewhere. However, I ignored it and stretched as I yawned.

I feel satisfied.

As I thought, a human being needs to live diligently and productively.

I should test the level 4 Poison Energy skill's power when I enter the 12th Floor's stage.

“Keruk. Inside the 12th Floor stage, there will be plenty of prey you could catch and experiment on. It will be easy to test its power.”

What are you talking about? Experiments should be done on my body.

“Keruk... Captain, are you really insane?”

“I need to grow the Great Poison Resistance Skill too. It is like killing two birds with one stone.”

“You will really die if you keep this up, Captain. Keruk.”

“I won't die. You think I have been doing self-harm only for a day or two?”

Having heard what I said, Idy raised both of her arms and double face palmed.

She sighed deeply. I grabbed her arm and pulled as I got on the portal.

Now, shall we get going?

[Round 15, Day 6, 03:30]

*

[Kyaaaaooooo-]

Two giant monsters the size of huge buildings, were jumbled up in a struggle.

The two monsters that appeared immediately after we entered the stage...

This is the same timing at the same exact spot.

Idy and I were already hiding at a place far away from the battle and watching their fight.

“Captain.”

“Yeah? What is it?”

“The bogus dragons that you told me about before, are you talking about those?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“They are size of mountains. How do you plan to hunt them?”

Kwwwuaaaaang-

Destructive sound echoed through the area, shaking the surroundings.

One of the monster used its fire breath.

Wow...

Last time, I was so busy running away, I didn’t get to see it well. Now that I see it, it really is powerful.

We are very far away. From this distance, it looks like just a flame that’s coming out of the mouth, but to see that such shockwave is emanates from it...

“Captain.”

“It’s all right. I won’t pick on them during this round. I’m

thinking about hunting them during the next round.”

“To me, you sound like you are going to purposely get yourself killed during the next round. Keruk.”

It’s all right. I won’t die.

I am going to run away if it looks like I’m going to die.

Idy still looked very anxious as she looked at me. I decided to bring up something that would cheer her up.

“Let’s go home first.”

“Keruk.”

As I expected, she quickly wiped away her anxiousness and smiled. She looked happy.

*

We found the cave that we used as our primary residence last time. From that point and on, we started our life at the 12th Floor for the second time.

The first thing to do was checking the Poison Energy Skill’s power, which had become level 4.

I had antidote potion ready and started experimenting on myself with the mana wrapped with poison energy.

After a few repeats, I felt symptoms of poison infection that I had not felt before.

The Poison Energy Skill finally broke through the Great Poison Resistance. It was finally having an effect of noticeable pain.

I could feel sharp and stiff pain at the site of the wound.

Um... The poison is spreading a little slowly.

Oh, good.

It's hurting my stomach too.

After a while, my respiratory track started to swell, making breathing difficult.

I could feel a strong headache. It was getting difficult to maintain clear vision.

It looks like my lung is still fine.

Now, the wound area is paralyzed. My senses are dulled there.

It's not bad.

There are quite a few symptoms happening.

It's just that the poison is spreading slowly.

Also, it is lacking in lethality.

There are many symptoms, including paralysis on the wound area, but this is not enough to cause death.

It's only to the extent of being in extreme pain for a few days before recovering little by little.

Of course, I have the Great Poison Resistance. Still, even with that under consideration, I am a little disappointed.

When it comes to poison, nerve poison seems to be the most effective.

That is from the personal experience of having been afflicted by it many times in the past.

After confirming the Poison Energy Skill's power, I handled the hunting all by myself.

It was to develop the Detection and Poison Energy Skills by utilizing them in the hunting.

Idy, who had to recreate the home from scratch, gladly agreed to this idea.

Around the time Idy almost completed remodeling the cave, I completed my work.

My Poison Energy Skill became level 5.

Now, the Poison Energy Skill acquired a certain degree of lethality.

Next, I focused on Tracking Skill.

To lean back and chase after the prey that was infected by the poison, I needed tracking-type skill.

I thought my Detection Skill will cover this, but Idy said that it will be lacking in efficiency. Heeding to her advice, I acquired Tracking Skill and developed it.

Tracking Skill was not like the Detection Skill where it was all about operating the mana.

I pursued the prey by noticing its trace, footprints, excrements, hair, smell and etc. as clues to predict the path.

Idy said that mana operation will be required when the Tracking Skill's level increased. However, I was not there yet.

I released a prey that was wounded and infected by the poison and tracked the prey afterwards.

Like that, I caught the prey and released it again.

As I repeated the process, my Tracking Skill developed quickly.

My skill's mastery increased, but I also gained experience. With them, I gained a bit of confidence in hunting and tracking inside the jungle.

Like that, I spent the days diligently focusing on developing my skills. Before I realized, the preys around home were all gone.

It was not a problem in particular.

I already had plenty of food.

Not having any prey around home halted my growth, but I already more than succeeded in achieving the desired skill growths that I planned in the beginning.

Now, let's put aside developments for a moment and really try making a move.

Let's see. It's been 11 days since I entered the 12th Floor stage.

Rain... won't fall for an entire week.

As for the wind, it will be consistent until the rainfall a week later.

I could be certain because I thoroughly memorized the daily weather from the last time.

Kuuu. I'm so diligent about preparing.

"Idy. Starting tomorrow, I'm going to try going to farther places."

"Keruk. Are you going to hunt further away?"

"Yes. I probably will have to go this far."

I opened the 12th Floor stage Ihaoi Continent's map that I got from Lee Jun-suk and explained the location to Idy.

"Keruk. Isn't that too far? It will take over nine days just to get there."

"I need to go that far. I plan to go for some serious hunting this

time.”

“Serious hunting?”

“Yes. First, I plan to set fire on this jungle with this.”

From the dimensional space backpack, I brought out a large bag of heat stones and explained.

I was aware that the inventory becomes inaccessible at the 12th Floor, so I placed all of necessary items in the large capacity dimensional space backpack beforehand.

I had 800 heat stones. Tossing in just one was enough to sustain a fire for an entire day.

They were enough to burn down the entire jungle.

Chapter 69 - Tutorial 12th Floor (8)

What's so attractive about fantasy genre?

Isn't it all about getting vicarious satisfaction from hearing or seeing amazing experiences that are beyond our wildest imaginations?

Everyone has a fantasy or two.

When people find novels or movies that can satisfy their desire, they indulge in them quickly. I think it is obvious why they would.

I also have such a fantasy.

The characters who occasionally appear in fantasy novels, such as griffin riders, wyvern riders, or dragon riders...

I'm talking about those.

The knights who ride on the backs of flying monsters and soar to the sky...

When I was a kid, I read fantasy novels and wondered how great it would be to have that kind of experience.

Standing on the top of the cliff and facing the fresh wind, I sighed.

It is the moment where my lifelong dream is about to come true.

I should be happy...

Although I became the mounted instead of the mounter.

“Here, get on my back, Idy.”

“Keruk. I never thought I would become the first human rider in the lizardman history.”

The strange class title lingered at my ears.

A human rider, a lizardman who is riding me, a human...

What a horrible mix...

*

[Talaria's Wings]

From the edge of the cliff, I spread the gigantic wings and lowered my body to take a stance.

“All right. Get on, Idy.”

“Keruk Keruk.”

She found it amusing for a moment. She then carefully got on my back.

“Keruk. I never even dreamed I would become the first human rider in the lizardman history.”

“I also never even dreamed I would be flying in the sky with a lizardman on my back. I always dreamed about what I’d be riding. I never once thought about me being the ride.”

“Keruk. Keruk. Captain, if you want, you can always ride me.”

What am I going to do by riding you?

Are you going to give me a piggy back ride?

Wait, hold on here...

Are you speaking in innuendoes?

“Hey!”

“Keruk. Keruk.”

I can hear Idy's laughter from the back.

Unlike earlier, her laughter sounded lewd. It was raising goosebumps on my neck and face.

I knew that she was teasing me, but it was still giving me the creeps.

“Hey! Don't fiddle with my arm! You are going to get in my way of flying!”

“Keruk. Keruk.”

Oh my, you are having so much fun here aren't you?

I think I should start flying right away so she won't play around.

I'll show you the true meaning of motion sickness from flight.

I'm going to have you go through an extreme course of the pain from flight motion sickness.

I took steps and jumped from the cliff.

Talaria's Wings' flight effect was activated. Like that, our flight begun.

The weather was completely clear. There wasn't even a single lump of cloud.

It was perfect for flying.

The jungle stretched to the horizon. It was a great sight to behold during flight.

“Keruk! Keruk!”

Is it fun?

Is it exciting?

Soon, I'll show you hell.

*

“Keruk. Captain, I think I'm going to throw up.”

“... Hold it for a bit. I'll slow down.”

To show hell to Idy who had been making fun of me, I performed a few aerial acrobat flight moves, and I regretted it immediately.

Unable to endure the motion sickness, Idy vomited.

She threw up right on my back.

Because it happened due to my overdone flight moves, I can't even complain to Idy...

... Ugh, seriously...

In the end, we landed and found a water stream. We were able to fly again after I washed my body and changed clothes.

Since then, I had been flying really quietly in low altitude.

I was no different from a fancy taxi service with exemplary driving.

Damn it. Damn it.

“Captain... I am really sorry. Are you very angry?”

“It's all right... It happened because I was acting out. Don't mind it.”

Who would I blame this on?

I am the one who is the dumbass.

Gosh.

There were a few reasons why we could comfortably fly through the sky on a clear day like this.

First, there was the information about that Ihaoi Continent that Lee Jun-suk sent after obtaining it from a Hard Difficulty manager.

Perhaps it was because the continent was covered in lush jungle with tightly packed trees. There weren't many large flying monsters living here.

Secondly, from the last round, while I spent 24 days in the jungle, I figured out the levels of most of the monsters here.

The situation now was different from the last time, when I didn't even know what kind of monsters were here.

Finally, while Idy and I are combined like this...

Combined? That sounds kind of weird.

With Idy on my back, we could fight off ordinary monsters with ease.

Because I'm flying with Talaria's Wing's flight effect, I don't need to use my body to fly.

I don't need to mind the flight control so much, hence moving my body and making decisions are that much easier.

In addition, there is the Wind Spirit's Blessing and Blink Skills.

Idy is also on my back, wielding a long spear. With her in charge of attack and checking the rear view, this is perfect.

There probably isn't anyone who could beat us on aerial combat, at least on 12th Floor Stage.

Because of these reasons, I was certain about the safety of the flight, so I decided to fly to the destination instead of walking on foot.

Besides the speed, covering several hundred kilometers through lush jungle is no easy task.

It is not just hard. The mental exhaustion from crossing several hundred kilometers is no joke.

We need to constantly cut away grass and tree branches getting in our way as we walk through narrow spaces between trees.

We also need to watch out for tree roots underneath.

There are countless bugs and poisonous plants.

Also, the environment is hot and humid

Although I like things tough, that's only when I'm grinding for the sake of developing skills.

When possible, I like comfort. Is that too obvious?

I focused on flying as I thought about a lot of things, but Idy carefully started a conversation.

“Captain. I think we had been flying for quite a while now. How about we rest for a bit while eating packed lunch?”

“Okay. Let's do that.”

Her voice still felt apologetic. That was bugging me.

I think I should at least compliment her by telling her how delicious the food is as I eat it.

Her motion sickness will be gone too if we spend an hour or two on the ground as we eat the lunch.

*

Although I made up my mind to compliment her cooking to make her feel better, the thought was unnecessary.

The packed lunch was delicious anyway. I would have only compliment her on the food anyway for how delicious it was.

It is the best, Idy.

“Keruk. Eat heartily, Captain.”

Idy looked pleased. She smiled like a doting mother as she watched me eat.

Wow, this is super tasty.

Seriously...

I think you could even open a restaurant.

Actually, in the past, I assumed lizardmen would eat raw food. I was completely wrong.

Maybe Idy was extraordinarily skilled in cooking. Regardless, her cooking was far tastier than the food I used to eat in Korea.

“Keruk. Why did you think lizardmen would eat raw food?”

“Because lizards do that.”

“Even monkeys eat raw food too. Keruk.”

Um... You got me there.

“Keruk. You should be mindful of this from now on. I’ve heard that humans are the only intelligent beings in the world that you came from. However, that is not the case in other worlds. You will meet various beings as you progress through the Tutorial. If you step out of bounds with your words carelessly, you could hurt their feelings, so you need to be careful.”

She was right.

I was careless and rude.

At the Fourth Floor, I treated goblins as just mindless monsters. I was astonished when I learned otherwise. To think I became complacent about this fact again in such a short period of time.

“Your tendency is probably influenced by the fact that the other beings you met so far were all enemies you had to defeat. Overthinking about the enemy’s culture or showing respect could occasionally come back to hurt you as poison. You could think the way you do unconsciously. However, from now on, most likely not all beings are going to be your enemies.”

I should be careful and remember Idy’s advice.

It is a worthy advice.

Where would I go to get advice like this?

“Thanks, Idy. I’ll remember it well and be careful from now on. Also, if you are upset because of what I said, I apologize.”

“Keruk. Keruk. It’s all right. You take my nagging seriously. I’m thankful.”

‘You worried for nothing’ was what Idy essentially said. I looked at Idy and smiled quietly.

This rascal is good at talking too.

I suddenly felt that I was fortunate to have met Idy.

It was a very unique fate that lead to our meeting and what came after.

I met her as the enemy at the Fifth Floor’s boss room. Who would have thought that I would be spending time like this with her and become close with her?

I thought about when we were standing on guard against each other with weapons pointed at each other and when she suddenly made mating proposal confession to me.

Our relation started with that, and it came this far.

It's very interesting.

Now, Idy became my friend and only comrade.

She is my advisor, supporter and even teacher.

I think it would be also fine to call her my family.

She is different from the people at the Order of Vigilance.

This is different from my relationship with the Order's members who I communicate through the community and meet in person once every two or so months.

When it came to the members of the Order, even when I got close to them and got to know them well, the relationship felt very business-like; it was more for just the social structure.

We were close because it was necessary and convenient for each other.

In comparison, when it came to Idy...

Our relationship was not like that. Instead, we had a closer, intimate, and supportive relationship.

Our relationship was not out of necessity.

What would I do if Idy could not help me in progressing through the stage anymore?

I would still want to be with her.

I like being with her.

When she is around, I feel comfortable and supported.

We understand each other easily and can smile together.

The fact that I have a friend like her, and the fact that someone like her is with me through the Tutorial when I had been alone for all this time...

I am thankful.

[God of Adventure has satisfied smile on the face while watching you.]

[God of Adventure is very satisfied with your revelation.]

[God of Adventure is very impressed and sympathetic after having read your thoughts.]

*

We finally arrived at the destination.

It took two days of flight.

I put my hand out and felt out the empty air.

I could feel an invisible wall.

I tried operating mana, but even mana could not penetrate the wall.

I'm guessing even fire won't work.

This is the edge of the 12th Floor Stage, the eastern edge.

This was the destination that I wanted to get to.

It has not rained in the past few days, so it is relatively less humid today.

It won't be raining for the next five days.

The wind is blowing from the east to the west.

Kuuuuu... It is perfect.

“Now, let's get started, Idy.”

With Idy riding on my back, I flew up to the sky again.

From the large bag we had prepared earlier, Idy brought out a heat stone.

Keruk. Just toss it like this?”

“Yes. Think of it as throwing it to shatter the heat stone. Throw it toward trees or ground.”

The heat stones will do the rest.

Small fires ignited wherever Idy threw the stones towards.

Heat stones are able to exude fire continuously for half a day once they start.

Their effectiveness is proven.

There were plenty of trees and grass around.

In an environment like this, a small seed of fire, even ones from a freshly tossed cigarette, could burn down the entire forest.

Actually, it would not take 800 heat stones. Even 20 would be enough to cause a huge firestorm.

“Keruk. Captain, the air is too hot.”

When Idy tossed about a dozen heat stones, because of the spreading fire, the temperature around the place increased rapidly.

Lizardmen were cold-blooded, so they were sensitive to temperature change.

I flew pretty far away from the flame.

“Keruk. Now it is a little better.”

We watched the fire spreading from a distance. It was incredible.

Wow...

Burn up, by experience points!

“If you are going to play with fire, you should do at least this much, haha.”

“Keruk... Keruk.”

This is strangely exciting.

Something is odd.

I’m feeling pleasure from burning down a forest using a manmade fire.

The flame was slowly burning everything and expanding. I watched it quietly, and it was just fun.

It felt like my chest was opened up completely. It was fun and exciting.

I think I’ll set more fires later whenever I get the chance.

Hahaha.

“Now, Idy. Throw a heat stone over there too. Let’s raise up the fire faster. More, more!”

Chapter 70 - Tutorial 12th Floor (9)

[Level Up]

[Agility increased by 2]

[Mana increased by 1]

[Heat Resistance Skill increased by 1]

[Tracking Skill increased by 1]

*

All right. This is perfect.

The level up speed is no joke.

I already knew that it was possible to gain experience from causing fire.

It was a small amount, about a quarter of the amount that I could have got from defeating the enemy directly.

A Normal Difficulty player discovered this before we even got to

the Round Ten, although that player did not think about causing a large-scale fire like this.

A red devil of flame engulfed the jungle. Black smoke completely filled the sky.

[Kiiiiaaaaak!]

I can hear the screams of the monsters from all over the place.

Most monsters chose to run away from the fire.

That's a wise choice.

They could either lose their life by staying or lose their habitat. It was obvious which one was the bigger loss.

However, my plan is to burn down the entire stage.

They can't escape from the fire indefinitely by running.

After all, this is not a natural disaster.

Running from the fire that started from the east, countless monsters arrive in the west.

The scale of the herds of monsters on the run is incredible.

We are looking at it from the sky. It is a sight to behold.

I see they are not fighting in this situation.

Some of them were pushing, shoving and running over one another, but none of them are standing around and fighting each other.

They were all diligently running away from the fire.

Flying animals were flying toward the west in orderly manner like a flock of birds' seasonal migrations.

However, there are some monsters who are trying to subdue the fire instead of running.

They are mostly ones with water-based skills who don't want to leave their territories.

Of course, they are not a huge, coordinated group. They are individually acting, so I don't think they can subdue fire this large.

However, because of bastards like them, the fire is spreading slower.

We need to personally kill these volunteer firefighting monsters.

[Keeek!]

Idy's spear pierced a monster and it died instantly.

Her attack was at a whole another level from a western knight's lance charge attack.

It was a death blow that benefit from the speed of a dive flight move.

Having killed the monster, I flew up into the sky again.

Idy was going to suffer from being near the fire too long.

To help her against the heat and motion sickness, I gave her a bottle of elixir. However, there was no need for us to be inside the heat continuously.

There were countless monsters running away from the fire, but there were a few that tripped while running and got injured. Unable to move, those monsters were swallowed by the fire.

It seemed there were a few that hid inside caves and were roasted to death.

Good, good.

“Keruk. I am a little uncomfortable with this. Perhaps it’s because I lived in forests before. I am a little afraid of a large fire like this.”

“It’s all right. This area is someone else’s home anyway.”

“If it keeps on heading west, the fire will reach our home too. Keruk.”

“It’s all right. It won’t be our home anymore once we clear the stage anyway.”

“Keruk...”

[Buuuuoooo!]

From a distance, a humongous monster appeared, roaring.

It looked like brachiosaurus.

Of the two bogus dragons, this one has barrier skill.

It would’ve been better if this one ran away from the fire too, but this bastard was using its huge body and barrier skill to try and stop the fire.

It's a huge prey to hunt. Let's try.

“Keruk. Are you really going to attack that monster?”

“Of course. Get me my sword from the dimensional space bag.”

Idy found the savage warrior's backsword and handed it to me.

I had been using this weapon for a really long time.

I bought it when I cleared the Fourth Floor.

It does not have any special attribute. However, it is very sturdy, and does not bend; hence my fondness of this weapon.

I wish I had a good spear to use.

Against a huge enemy like this, a longer weapon would be better.

I happen to have learned spear techniques from Idy earlier, but I wouldn't be able to use it without a spear. It's too bad.

I should buy a spear as soon as I clear the 12th Floor.

We circled around the bogus dragon.

We didn't get too close.

We have to stay away from its range and dawdle.

Like a fly...

However, we are no ordinary fly.

[Soul Steal]

It was going to deteriorate the enemy's vitality. It could lead to death of the enemy if the effect continued for a long time.

The skill also returned stamina to me if I killed the enemy affected by the skill.

It really is the best skill.

It's also perfect for drawing attention.

So far, although the monster noticed me, it was more focused on the fire. Now, the bogus dragon looked at me and roared.

[Buuuuuoooooooo!]

What are you going to do by screaming at me? You rascal.

You think you can catch me when I'm flying around?

Also, if you chase after me, your home will burn away completely.

I screamed back at the bogus dragon.

Because of the effect from the knowledge of the time before babel, that bogus dragon clearly understood what I said.

"Captain, as I thought, you become too underhanded when you are fighting."

The bogus dragon glared at me for a moment. It then turned its gaze back to the flame.

"Get ready, Idy. Let's attack by taking advantage of this."

"Keruk."

I flew to blind spot of the monster on its back.

"Now!"

My backsword and Idy's spear were both swung at the same time.

Both weapons precisely aimed at the monster's back.

Kwwaaaang!!

However, our attack was blocked by the monster's barrier skill.

Isn't that response too fast?

I turned to look, and the monster turned its head. It was glaring at us directly with its giant eyes.

I performed a few aerial acrobatics to dodge the monster's tail swinging at us. I put distance from the monster.

I didn't think it could respond so fast to the ambush attack coming at its rear.

Especially when that monster is so huge...

It's pretty agile.

"Keruk. What do we do now, Captain?"

The monster is now ignoring the fire and steadily glaring at us.

"Well, we should keep trying."

It will work eventually if we keep on trying.

The situation is overwhelmingly in our favor.

The monster wants to protect its habitat from the fire.

Its habitat is currently being lost to the fire.

The monster has to kill us quickly or just ignore us. It needs to choose one.

However, if it does decide to come after us, we can just run away by flying.

Meanwhile, its habitat will be decimated by the fire.

If it ignores us?

Then we just need to repeat the attack.

That barrier skill is not a passive skill, meaning that it won't sustain itself indefinitely.

It is an active skill that the monster needs to cast just before being attacked.

We will be attempting our attacks from its blind spots.

As long as we succeed just once, that will be the end of the monster.

The area has become a sea of flame.

The monster is also subject to the deterioration effect of the Soul Steal.

If it gets poisoned on top of this, well...

Its movement will become dull. It will keep on allowing more attacks to hit and will eventually die from the poison.

It's perfect, right?

"Keruk. I somehow feel sorry for that monster. Keruk."

"Hey. Should you say such things?"

"I know. I was joking. Keruk."

Now, shall we go for another try?

The monster, which was glaring at us, gave up chasing us in the end. It turned its attention towards the fire.

It is still occasionally glancing at us.

You have huge moving eyes. You think I won't notice?

I increased my flying speed and then used the Wind Spirit's Blessing to accelerate further to approach the monster.

As I thought, the monster was wary of our movement. It swung its tail at us.

[Blink]

I used the Blink to dodge the tail and blinked closer to the monster.

Clank!

Again, our attack was blocked by the barrier.

Isn't this bastard's reaction time really is incredible?

I continued to fly along the body of the monster and tried more attacks.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

I used the Blink again after that.

We moved toward the lower end of the monster, toward its legs.

Because of the monster's large body, it could not clearly view its legs.

Slice...

The backsword and the spear's tip cut through its skin.

Chuuuuuuk...

I swung my weapons again and deepened its injuries.

Clank!

The third attempt was blocked by the barrier.

We moved out of the way and dodged the monster's leg swing.

[Buuuuooooo!]

With the monster's roar behind us, we ran away for now.

Hahahaha.

The monster chased after us for about five minutes. After a moment, it stopped.

The monster's eyes were blood shot. Its gaze remained concentrated on us.

I think it is mad to the core.

Still, what could it do now?

The poison energy has already infiltrated its body.

The wounded area will slowly paralyze.

The monster will start to suffer from all sorts of pains.

Its movement speed will slow substantially once the paralysis reaches the leg muscles.

Unless this monster has poison resistance, great poison resistance at least, it will be pretty painful.

Since it is so huge, the poison won't be fatal, but...

At least it won't be able to ignore Idy's attacks.

Idy couldn't explain exactly how it worked, but her spear technique killed most monsters with a clean, single blow.

"We won. Keruk."

Now, the monster has to give up on its habitat.

Unable to hold its anger, it chased us for five minutes while its habitat went up in flames.

Its options now changed.

It can either chase us or run away from the flame.

Either way, it will end in its death.

Although this is obvious, running away from us is not a possible option for this monster.

*

[Buuuooooo!]

Its loud roar pierced the area. The roar was full of anguish and frustration.

Is it not able to feel even anger anymore?

Its legs were full of wounds.

Also, every time a new wound was inflicted, more poison energy infiltrates the monster's body.

Now, the monster didn't even have any strength left to move. It just plummeted to the ground and cried out.

“Let's go. We should finish it with our own hands.”

“Keruk.”

If we let it be, the monster was going to die by from the fire.

That wasn't a bad thing, but we spent half a day fighting it. It was a tough fight.

We should end it ourselves.

There is the matter of the experience points.

I pierced my sword right between its eyes. Several messages appeared in a row in front of me.

[Level Up]

[Strength went up by 1]

[Stamina went up by 1]

[Agility increased by 1]

[Mana Circuit Skill increased by 1]

[Sensory Amplification Skill increased by 1]

Oh, all right.

Mana Circuit and Sensory Amplification Skills don't rise easily.
They leveled up.

[God of Slowness is satisfied with your exploit.]

[God of Adventure is satisfied with your exploit.]

[God of Battle is interested in you.]

[God of Light is very intrigued by you.]

[God of Duel is disappointed by the unacceptable result.]

It's been a while since I've seen so many gods showing interest.

It is expected. What we are doing right now is not something that happens very often.

I am certain that these bogus dragons are not there to be hunted.

Compared to other monsters at the 12th Floor Stage, these dragons have excessively higher specs.

Their size is at a whole another level, and the skills that they have are directly useful in combat.

If I could not fly, and if I could not corner it into a disadvantage by setting the fire, it would not have been possible to hunt the monster so easily like this.

The bogus dragons are more like a message to the player who enters the stage. By showing the two fight as soon as the player enters the stage, it is sending a message that the place is dangerous like this so the player should be careful and focus on survival for 25 days.

To go a little further, they also serve as a clue that the monsters at 12th Floor Stage each have a skill.

Still, it was totally worth overexerting ourselves and killing it.

I think I will get plenty of additional awards after this.

Idy was having a hard time because of the heat. I flew up high and flew away from the heat for her.

I also breathed in too much smoke while fighting the monster.

“Keruk. Now, what are you going to do?”

“First, we should go somewhere far away from the fire. Let’s rest there. We should eat the packed lunch too. If we could find a safe place, I think it would be also good to take a nap.”

The fire had already engulfed east side of the jungle. I am sure it will continue to spread even if I left it be.

“After that?”

Why are you asking the obvious?

We need to set more fires.

Chapter 71 - Tutorial 12th Floor (10)

“Keruk. Keruk. Our home is burning, Captain.”

Um... I see.

In the end, the cave that we had been using as our base also got swallowed by the fire.

Contrary to my expectations, the fire is spreading too easily.

It is too much.

It had not rained for a while, so the weather is dry. Plus, the wind is still blowing westward.

In addition, there is no civilization here that formed a cohesive group. The rapidly spreading fire is the result of these three factors.

At the Ihaoi Continent in the 12th Floor Stage, each and every monster possessed powerful and unique skills. However, they didn't have a large scale civilization beyond the size of a small tribe.

At best, the biggest one was like that of the orangutans.

The orangutans chose to run to the west after realizing the

intensity of the fire.

They might try to fight the fire when it spreads too far. However, as long as I interfere, the flame will not get extinguished.

The plan is working out too smoothly.

There aren't any unexpected enemies getting in our way.

Monsters either ran away in chaos or tried to stop the fire on their own. We just needed to hunt them down.

I actually feel anxious because things are rolling along too smoothly.

This is Hell Difficulty, it shouldn't be so easy.

“... Keruk.”

Huh? Idy's voice is strange.

“Hey, are you crying?”

There was no response.

Instead, I felt some light movement on my back.

It felt like Idy just raised her hand to wipe off tears from her eyes.

What should I do?

I ended up making Idy cry.

I took Idy's sentiment about the home that she made too lightly, which was burning right now.

Should I console her?

How?

I can't turn this situation around either.

The fire is now at a level that I could not stop even if I wanted to.

The home has already been swallowed in the blaze.

Wow... Really, what should I do?

Should I send a message to Kim Min-huk and ask?

When it came to relationships, he was better than Doraemon. If I got advice from him, it would work out somehow.

However, Idy is on my back right now.

Idy won't be able to read and understand the message, but I don't think it will be good idea for me to seem like I was ignoring Idy at this moment.

I'm facing a dilemma with no easy solution.

I'm facing the greatest danger ever since I entered the 12th Floor.

I think I should say something to Idy...

Time is ticking.

“Ah.... Um.”

Damn it. I was anxious, so I opened my mouth, but I could not think of anything to say.

This is driving me nuts.

Am I too late?

Could it be too late to say anything?

The awkward silence and uncomfortable atmosphere was making my head swim in circles.

Thankfully, a person came to resolve this difficult situation.

No, it was not a person.

It was a monster.

[Kiiiiaaaaoooo!]

I see. It came out!

The other bogus dragon!

This isn't just a large sized monster.

It is a real bogus dragon with a fire breath skill.

It sounds weird to call it a real bogus dragon, but anyway, I am really glad to see that monster right now.

“Idy! Let's kill that one first and think about it later!”

“Keruk. I got it.”

Idy quickly erased her gloom and responded with grit.

I used Blink several times in a row to get out of the fire breath's range that was directed towards us. We flew to get closer to the bogus dragon.

*

[Kwaaaaooooo..!]

Obviously, the result was our victory.

Its fire breath was a powerful attack. However, this one was actually easier to fight than the monster earlier which had the barrier skill.

When it was shooting its fire breath, its signs were too apparent.

Hey, I'm going to shoot the fire breath now!

It was practically attacking after telling us that. I just needed to use Blink and dodge them.

If there was anyone in gaming world who could not even dodge that, they must have one shitty hand. I bet he could not even be in a WOW Raid.

Ah, of course, one has to be able to fly and have mobility equaling Blink Skill.

After dodging the fire breath, I stabbed it thoroughly with sword a number of times while it was catching its breath; the fight was over just like that.

Just like the monster that used the barrier, after being affected by the deterioration from Soul Steal and the poison from the Poison Energy, the monster lost strength where it stood and plummeted.

All that was left to do afterwards was piercing its head and ending the battle.

Thump...

When the monster collapsed to the ground, the monster's gigantic body triggered a massive shockwave.

Hmm, it didn't cause me to level up this time.

No. This is not important right now.

"Kuhum. Idy. The thing is... Our plan is too effective, so..."

"Keruk... I know."

“Actually, I was planning on burning down just the eastern area. I never predicted that it would spread to the west so fast.”

“Keruk. Keruk.”

Now that it has come to this, it cannot be helped.

Since our home burned down too, let's just burn the entire jungle and clear the stage, Idy.

“I got it, Captain. I am aware that it could not be helped. I won't complain anymore, so tell me about the plan to go forward.”

She still looked down, but she asked coolly.

To clear the stage, the condition is to survive for 25 days. However, if I burn everything and conquer the stage, then I should be able to clear the stage instantaneously.

*

[Kiiiiiaaaak!]

[Kaaaaak! Kyaaaak!]

My ears hurt.

Several hundred thousand monsters are at the same place roaring.

The fire spread through the entire stage in the end. It eventually progressed to the end of the western boundary.

To the west... The monsters had been running and running to the west. Now, blocked by the invisible wall at the boundary of the stage, they were trapped.

This place was literally no different from hell.

At one end, there were countless monsters using skills in attempt to stop the fire somehow.

As I thought, these bastards are quite intelligent.

They are recognizing the dire situation. They are setting aside their differences and cooperating with each other.

At one end, there are monsters with burns that are crying out in pain.

On another end, monsters are running amok, shoving and stepping on other monsters in attempt to get a little closer to the west.

There are even monsters who were fighting each other in middle

of this chaos.

Numerous monsters are being killed from being shoved and stepped on by other monsters as well.

Their few types of responses were all desperate and terrifying.

The screams of the monsters... I think I understand them.

The knowledge before the time of Babel is clearly delivering to me the fear, anguish, despair, sadness and longing that are echoed in their screams.

This place is hell.

“Keruk. Captain, here it is.”

I drank the heat resistance potion that Idy handed to me.

I had been drinking one every six hours.

I felt like I was wasting this pricy potion, but it could not be helped.

The heat from the fire which was burning down the entire jungle could not be avoided easily anymore.

Now, without the potion, Idy's movement became very sluggish, and she suffered from dizziness and headaches.

Now, shall we get going?

With Idy, we flew to the area where it was packed with monsters.

The monsters saw us, but they were too busy to respond.

Are they thinking that we are just two of them that ran here to avoid the fire?

That's not bad for us.

Idy and I moved quietly so we won't draw the monsters' attention.

To where the monsters are all gathered, to the middle of the area...

There were several hundred thousand monsters there.

The west was blocked by an invisible wall, and there was a huge wave of flames coming from the right.

Isn't this perfect?

This is where I wanted to be.

This is the situation I wanted to happen. These are the enemies I wanted to face.

Instead of finding and hunting one or two monsters at a time at snail-like pace, I prefer this, being surrounded by countless monsters and fighting like a madman.

The adrenaline from my excitement heightened my senses.

“Now, shall we begin?”

“Keruk.”

Idy also quietly nodded.

Slowly, wielding the backsword, I cut off a monster from the back.

Also, I stabbed the sword into the heart of a monster that was looking at the fire in the distance.

Because of the fire in the distance, all the monsters crawling at the area washed in anxiety and fear, there were monsters that didn't notice us, and we killed them one by one with a single blow.

We did it quietly so it wouldn't cause a large commotion.

However, not all of these monsters were in complete disarray.

As we increased the number of monster corpses, other monsters in the area started to be wary of us.

They quickly took battle stances when we approached them. There were some that ran toward us from a distance to attack.

However, they were not coordinated.

There probably are over several hundred monsters fighting each other in this hell hole.

Most of the monsters ignored us, thinking we are just more of such monsters fighting another.

Like that, for a long time, we cut and stabbed monsters and killed them. The situation changed little by little as we proceeded.

Now, all monsters around us were glaring and growling at us.

“Keruk. I think they all finally noticed us.”

You mean they noticed that we had been indiscriminately attacking all monsters in our sight?

“It won’t matter even if they realized it.”

[Soul Steal]

I used the skill at a narrow range.

The monsters’ eyes harbored intensified animosity as they were affected by the skill’s deteriorating effect.

Now, all of these monsters are staring at me and recognizing that I am definitely an enemy.

With all of their murderous gazes focused on me, I felt an electrifying thrill.

Hahahaha.

That’s right. This is it.

This is it.

“What are you glaring at! You little monster bastards!”

I shouted and charged toward the monsters in front of me.

Although there are hostile monsters are surrounding us, in the end, they are only an extremely small fraction of the total.

Most of the several hundred thousand monsters gathered here are not even aware of our presence.

Like that, I am going to kill the monsters little by little.

From the outer edge of the west, the spreading wave of fire will continue to swallow up the monsters. Meanwhile, from the inside, we will kill the monsters disoriented by the chaos one at a time.

It is a perfect master plan.

[Kyyyyyaaaaaak!]

I thought that as I stabbed a knife to a screaming monster who lost its legs by my backsword.

I thought it was perfect.

*

“Keruk.”

Idy was making the sound out of frustration. Having heard her, my head tilted lower even further.

“Keruk. Captain, so... what happened to that conquest clear?”

“Um... that is... I... I don't know!”

The only thing I could do was to yell confidently.

I don't know, so what could I do?

We burned the entire jungle to ashes. We killed all monsters that used to be alive. Despite all that, the conquest clear was still not accomplished. How should I know why?

“Keruk... Captain, I need to rest for a bit now. I was exposed to the heat for far too long.”

While we were killing the monsters one by one, there was a sudden change in the situation.

There were monsters that were putting up valiant fight against the spread of fire. However, their defensive line against the fire collapsed.

Riding the wind, the flame started to spread to the west again.

In state of panic, the monsters swarmed toward the west and pounded on the invisible wall.

Of course, the wall remained unyielding.

That wall must be made by the system to contain the space inside the stage.

At an instant, several tens of thousands of monsters died from being trampled upon.

With monsters running amok, I could no longer be certain about our survival while being in midst of it.

We stopped hunting and escaped from the area.

We moved to the area that had been completely burned to ashes and was no longer burning. However, in the process, we had to go through the sky above a wave of flames.

I had Idy take heat resistance potion and low-level elixir. However, it her condition didn't seem well.

I brought out a tent from the dimensional space bag and had her go inside.

Fortunately, I had a tent that had the temperature control function.

This time, I brought out freeze potions from the bag and spread

the freezing water around.

I spread them like a farmer spreads pesticide to the farming field. The heat coming off from the ground cooled a little, although it was still like a sauna.

I crunched down to the ground. I looked around.

Ugh...

What should I do.

Am I supposed to hold out until the round ends?

In this place where everything is burned to ashes?

... How many meat jerkies did I have left in the bag?

Chapter 72 - Tutorial 12th Floor (11)

After burning the monsters at the western edge of the stage, Idy and I had been aimlessly flying around the stage to pass the time.

As we flew around, we could occasionally find monsters that survived the fire.

We spent our time hunting down the survivors.

Now, Idy was completely used to flying. She didn't completely hate the new daily routine.

It wasn't that she liked flying. She didn't like touching down on a barren ground.

I felt the same.

There were just black charcoals and white ashes. The desolate field was uncomfortable and an unpleasant environment to stay in. Also, it was icky from mental health perspective.

There was an old saying about how one who hurt others won't be able to sleep, and the one who was hurt will be.

Those wise ancestors were completely right.

I was the one who caused the fire, and I couldn't even walk

around the ground without of feeling awkward and leery. On the other hand, the ones who were hurt were sleeping soundly.

Although technically, they were all sleeping because they were dead.

“Keruk. Captain, we don’t have water anymore.”

I came to my senses at her alarming words.

Damn it.

The huge fire completely evaporated all streams and ponds that could be seen occasionally in the stage.

We don’t have water.

On the large lake on south west region, a bit of water was left. However, because of monsters who jumped into the water to escape the fire and drowned there, the water there was contaminated.

“Let’s try enduring it...”

“Keruk...”

We were no different from the stranded survivors.

Damn it. I gained substantial experience points from burning down the jungle, but what I lost was greater than what I gained from this.

We lost the vacation life and became stranded survivors.

We are also almost out of food.

To begin with, I didn't bring a lot of food in the dimensional bag.

There were little bits of meat jerkies and spices that I placed in there long time ago.

After all, why would I pack any food when Idy cooked delicious meals every day?

Damn it all.

With everything burned away in the jungle, finding food was fucking difficult.

There were corpses of monsters everywhere. However, they were all burnt to black crisps.

There were other corpses in better conditions, but it already had been a while since they died.

Their flesh was rotting. It was impossible to cook anything out of that.

We occasionally found live monsters and obtained meat. However, it was incredibly rare.

It was hard to find a single living monster after flying around whole day.

Ah, I should have just continued training at that cave instead.

“Keruk. It’s too late to realize that now.”

*

Idy disappeared.

The Dead Summon’s duration had expired.

Because I did not have the moment to spare to think about the duration at the time, we ended up parting ways before I even had the chance to properly say goodbye.

Should I summon her again?

Um...

Let's do that next time.

I should summon her again if I need to challenge the 12th Floor again or when I need her in some other floor.

Even if I summoned her now, there is nothing she could do here; she wouldn't like it here either.

With Idy gone, my life here became harder.

Even when I found a monster that was alive, I didn't know how to carve its meat out. I didn't know how to cook it either.

I figured I should know how to make a fire and roast the meat. However, I didn't think it would taste this bad.

The barbeque that Idy cooked did not taste like dirt water.

Just what's the difference between Idy and I?

While I spent days with Idy, my senses opened to delicious meals. This was coming to haunt me now.

In the past, just eating meat jerkies were more than enough for me. Now, I wanted to eat tasty meals.

Whenever I closed my eyes, I could see the cooking that Idy prepared.

UUUUUuuuuuaaaaaaaaaaaa!

Like that, for the first time, I learned just how fearsome the desire for food was.

A new problem surfaced.

I no longer have anything to wipe my bottom with after taking a dump.

The leaves, which I had been using as toilet papers, were burnt away. All of them.

I don't even have water.

Kuruk Kuruuuuk.

My stomach was making noises. I searched the inside of the dimensional space bag as I held my stomach.

Is there anything I can use to wipe?

Tissues... I don't have any.

Papers... There isn't any.

Armors... That's not appropriate.

Ugh!

I felt a sudden pain. I urgently tightened my [sphincter](#).

[PR Note: Sphincter is, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, an annular muscle surrounding and able to contract or close a bodily opening. In this case, he's just clenching his ass super hard.]

Ugh... This is crazy. I had been holding it for so long. I feel dizzy.

I want to go take a dump soon and relax.

Like that, I was searching the bag, and what I found was the muffler.

It was the handmade muffler that I knit for myself while I was at the 2nd Floor's waiting room.

Looking at the fluffy fabric, I agonized over the idea.

Could I use this lovely muffler as toilet paper?

This is no ordinary muffler.

Back when I was mentally cornered, I made this muffler to find peace and comfort in my heart.

To me, this is no different from [Wilson](#).

[TL: He is referencing Wilson, the volleyball, from the movie Cast Away.]

Actually, this muffler even has a name.

Its name is Hororong.

For my convenience, could I sacrifice Hororong?

I really could not decide.

[Lee Ho-Jae, 12th Floor: Hey, between a human's dignity and a precious memory, which one is more important?]

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: I'm busy.]

You heartless rascal.

Ugh... I cannot hold it anymore.

I have to make a decision now.

It was like Hororong was looking at me and crying. I tightly held the muffler in my hand and firmed my heart.

At Tutorial, 12th Floor, Hell Difficulty, Hororong was killed in action.

*

[Congratulations. You are the first one ever in the history to clear the 12th Floor Stage by conquering it.]

I buried Hororong on the ground and even placed a partially burnt piece of wood that was a half-charcoal as a replacement for a tombstone. I was in middle of a prayer when the message appeared.

It was a conquest clear message.

Now?!

Why? All of sudden!

I just sacrificed Hororong and even made a grave!

If clear condition was met just 10 minutes sooner, Hororong

didn't have to die!

Damn it.

I can think of one thing as to why the conquest clear was accomplished now.

Despite the large fire that burned down the entire forest, there were quite a few monsters that survived.

They either had fire resistance skills or quick movement skills similar to flight. They were the extreme few that survived.

I thought such monsters were the last hindrances to the conquest clear, so I had been going around and hunting them down.

Just now, the last surviving monster died.

Although I was not the one who hunted it.

The life system inside the stage was completely decimated after the fire.

In the end, this jungle is just a stage inside the Tutorial.

It is a sealed environment surrounded by invisible walls.

Along with this special characteristic, the fire completely obliterated the life system inside.

Even I had been struggling to find food.

When I, the one who could fly around the entire stage, was struggling like this, how would the other monsters fare in this situation?

They didn't even have meat jerkies packed inside a convenient dimensional space bag.

Considering the time frame, it is about time when all monsters would have died from starvation.

In the end, only Hororong suffered needlessly.

[You acquired Fire Element Resistance Lv. 1]

[Heat Resistance Lv.6, Burn Resistance Lv.12 were combined into Fire Element Resistance Lv.1]

[You cleared 12th Floor, Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your status abnormality and wounds will be healed.]

[You acquired 3000 points as the clear reward.]

[You acquired 3000 points for the best clear.]

[Many gods are showing positive responses to you. You acquired 5100 points.]

[Many gods are showing negative responses to you. You lost 4900 points.]

[You will be given additional reward based on your play record.]

[You acquired 4400 points.]

Usually, that should have been the end of the messages. However, it was a little different this time.

Numerous messages continued to pop up.

[All gods in the White Holy Temple is watching you.]

[God of Slowness is greatly satisfied.]

[God of Duel is hating you.]

[God of Death is showing interest in you.]

[God of Life is looking at you negatively.]

[God of Forest is criticizing you.]

[God of Pain is smiling toward you.]

[God of Devotion is looking at someone with saddened face.]

[God of Games is entertained from watching you.]

One by one, numerous messages about gods' responses showed up.

There were exactly one hundred messages like that.

This was the first time for me to see something like this after clearing a stage.

I actually think the Sixth Floor's clear was a more meaningful achievement than 12th Floor's clear, yet this happened.

The number of gods who were interested in me steadily grew since.

Could it be that the number had grown to one hundred, resulting in such long list of notifications?

It might be that there are total of one hundred gods in the Tutorial.

I don't think I can gain anything from this information.

For now, I should ask Kiri Kiri.... Actually I don't think I can ask her.

Information about gods are expensive.

Let's set my curiosity aside for later.

More importantly, I should check the rewards.

First, let's look at the additional reward.

Instead of skills or items, I got points.

During the last round, I got the Poison Energy Skill even though I failed to clear the stage.

Because of that, I wondered if I could get more skills from here and even thought about repeatedly challenging the 12th Floor.

I cleared the stage in quite a grandeur way, yet I only got points.

As I thought, instead of repeating the stage, aiming for the conquest clear was the right choice because I honestly thought this might happen.

Now, regarding the Fire Element Resistance Skill that I got as the reward for the conquest clear...

When I was at the Second Floor, I got Mental Corruption Resistance Skill from the conquest clear. It could be considered as a high-level skill among all passive skills.

It was the only immunity skill that I had. Also, it was a great skill that affected my overall mentality.

Considering that I got it at the Second Floor, I could even say that it was like a cheat skill.

Because I had received such a great skill in the past for the conquest clear, I had high expectations for the reward.

[Fire Element Resistance (Lv.1)]

Explanation: Provides resistance to fire element.

What is this?

Why is the explanation so short?

Resistance to fire element...

The skill is not limited to just heat or burn. This skill encompasses all afflictions related to fire element.

I think it is a pretty high-level skill in comparison to the Heat Resistance and Burn Resistance.

I had level 8 Heat Resistance and level 12 Burn Resistance, yet I only obtained level 1 Fire Element Resistance.

When I obtained the Great Poison Resistance, the level 4 Poison Resistance Skill was combined into the newly obtained skill, resulting in level 2 Great Poison Resistance. Considering how that played out...

I think I should check out its effectiveness when I get the time.

Now, it is time for me to go meet Kiri Kiri.

Hm Hm... I know this, but I am not a person with a great character.

Honestly, I am petty, and I hold grudges for a long time.

That's how I am honestly.

I looked at the grave in front of me and thought about the vow I made when I entered the 12th Floor's Stage.

For one last time, I paid respects to Hororong's grave. Afterwards, I stepped into the portal.

Farewell... Hororong.

Goodbye. I'll miss you.

I'll definitely avenge your death.

"It's been a long time! This time, it has been a very long time!"

As soon as I teleported through the portal, I could see the green field and Kiri Kiri.

Kiri Kiri was hopping and busily yapping away.

"Hooowwwjae... Are you not going to cry this time either? It's all right if you cry! Ah hahat."

I didn't say a word. I merely opened the store window and purchased a cake.

*

“Ahhhhhang! Give me! Don't take what I was eating!”

Kiri Kiri's face was soaked in sorrowful tears. I looked at her face and put up devious smile.

You rascal. 'Ah hahat' you say?

“Hey! You should have at least told me to pack some toilet papers! Where's your sense of common decency?”

“Ahhhhhang! It would have been no fun if I told you that!”

I, the judge, found no ground for mitigating factors, hence I shall execute the sentence.

To make sure Kiri Kiri could not chase me, I used the Talaria's Wings and Blink to fly up to the sky.

Kiri Kiri hopped from her spot and raised her hands toward the cake that was flying away from her. Kiri Kiri shouted,

“NOOOOOOOO! I am sorry! I was wrong! Please don't fly away!

Give me the cake and then fly away!

Chapter 73 - Tutorial 13th Floor (1)

[Don't overdo it. If you recklessly go a step further than the limits of your abilities, you may end up seeing your own blood.]

[Yes, I understand. Mister. How far did you go?]

*

Kiri Kiri threw tantrum in tears for a great long while. In the end, she fell on the floor on her stomach and cried her eyes out. I calmed her down and got her to sit in front of me.

There was a candy stick in Kiri Kiri's mouth.

Although it is called a candy stick, I guess it could be also considered as a calming medicine.

Ah, of course, this was long after the cake had disappeared into my stomach.

To tease Kiri Kiri some more, I was planning on leaving one bite worth of it still, but I ended up eating the whole thing because it was so tasty.

Perhaps it was because I had been only eating tasteless meat jerkies and dirt-water like monster meats recently. The cake was so delicious, so I ate it all.

This fact was important, so that's why I'm stating it twice.

"Are you going to do that again, or are you going to stop doing that?"

"I won't do it again, Hiiiiing."

I thought this was enough. I decided to forgive Kiri Kiri.

Despite her appearance, Kiri Kiri was the Hell Difficulty's Manager.

Although... in comparison to the Managers of other difficulties, she was different in many ways.

I opened the store window and purchased jawbreaker candy set.

You must work harder and more diligently from now on.

You must not omit information for your entertainment.

I made her promise on those two things and handed the candy set package to her.

Actually, Kiri Kiri had been carrying out her task diligently as well as she could.

The whole thing about fun or whatnot was probably just to tease me.

Kiri Kiri was always lighthearted in spirit. However, when it came to conversations about information, she maintained very serious attitude.

“Heeeeng. Last time, Hooouuujaee told me I should be weary of an old man who gives me candy.”

... This rascal?

“I am not an old man, so it’s all right.”

“Heeeeng.”

By threatening her on possibly taking the candy away from her, I managed to make her clearly recognize the irrefutable truth of the universe regarding the fact that I was not an old man.

*

“Magic?”

“Yes. I felt something when I was at the 12th Floor.”

Monsters shot fires, created walls of ice and generated bone spikes in mid-air.

The monsters each had a skill. I could call their skills as magic.

That's true, right?

Of course, Kiri Kiri did not answer.

The monsters did not understand the fundamentals of the magic that they possessed.

Perhaps that was the reason. There were extreme few that knew how to utilize the magic properly.

Only the monsters like the orangutan monsters were able to utilize their abilities in various applications.

Other monsters just used their skills and only understood the effects that they could observe.

It was like us. It was like how we, the players inside the Tutorial, learned Skills and used them.

"I cannot tell you things like the activating mechanism behind Skills."

“Is that also expensive?”

“Besides the expense, the information about magic has too many things jumbled up in convoluted way. There are far too many different subjects I need to touch on just to explain one thing. I can tell you if you pay a very high price for it, but it will not be efficient.”

I thought she would simply say that it is a precious information, but...

Um...

“Anyway, that’s why I felt the need to learn a bit more about magic.”

“You won’t be able to learn Skills related to magic theories yet.”

“Instead of those, if you have things like books related to magic, I was thinking about studying myself by purchasing the books.”

Kiri Kiri thought about it hard for a moment and said,

“It will be really hard to study them. Still, you can purchase the books for now.”

Is that so...

In the store window, I never could find any books related to magic.

I was not the only one.

No player in the Tutorial ever found anything remotely similar to an educational magic textbook in the store window.

Could it be that such could be purchased only through the Managers?

It seems magic textbooks are treated as being on the same level as combat items.

With Kiri Kiri's help, I purchased two magic textbooks.

One book was about basic magic theory. The other one was about area effective enclosure and skill sealing.

I became interested in the enclosure and sealing because of the skill sealing that the leader of the orangutans used.

The ability to seal a skill...

There was no need to explain the critical importance of the main Skill used in the combat and how much impact it has in a fight.

At the 12th Floor's Stage, all monsters each had a Skill, yet that monster could seal a Skill in the opponent.

Considering the size of the orangutans' group, their intelligence, and the sealing skill demonstrated by their leader, the orangutan group was virtually the ruling class of the jungle.

Actually, fighting the orangutans were more difficult than the bogus dragons.

"These will be difficult for you. You might be able to perform enclosure magic somehow through a medium. However, sealing magic will be really difficult."

"How difficult?"

"To begin with, it is not something an ordinary human being can master. Also, sealing magic is not something a human being can use."

It cannot be used by a human...

"A human being using one's own power to use sealing magic is virtually unheard of. No, it was never done before? When it is used, it is done by borrowing god's power."

"Borrowing god's power? That's possible?"

“When you become a god’s apostle and obtain skills related to sealing, then you will be able to do it.”

Um... power skills from gods...

It seems like sealing magic is a high difficulty magic, beyond what I initially thought.

Still, I decided to have the books ready for now.

I had points to spare. Also, it may not help me now, but it might help me later as I continue my study.

“Still, you have the knowledge before the time of babel, so you will be able to read the texts at least. I am not sure if you will be able to comprehend it though.”

Is it that hard?

Kiri Kiri had been maintaining her negative stance on magic study. I was feeling a little rebellious toward her opinion.

Actually, when it comes to studying, I have confidence in myself.

“Heeeng. Magic theory is not just some study.”

I’ll know when I try.

Let's get to the next topic.

"I've heard something was going to be held soon? Can I get some information on that?"

Recently, the Order of Vigilance obtained information that an event was going to be held inside the Tutorial.

They also learned that this was not going to be another day of the great harmony.

"Aaaang. To tell you information about that..."

"I don't have enough allowances left?"

Kiri Kiri nodded. She then said to wait for a bit.

She crunched down on the ground and thought hard about something as she fiddled with her fingers.

"Actually, I am not supposed to tell you this, but I'll tell you because you bought me delicious cakes so far. You need to work harder from now."

Having heard what she said about working harder, I realized what Kiri Kiri was saying.

Before, as I bought her a cake, I had told her that she needed to work harder.

It seemed Kiri Kiri was mimicking what I did back then.

“All right. I’ll buy you cake more diligently.”

Kiri Kiri quickly covered her mouth with both of her hands and acted casually. However, I could hear loud noise of her breathing through the nose, which reflected just how excited she was.

“Heeehing. Listen carefully because this is short. Foreigner, second.”

Foreigner, second.

What could they mean?

I was thinking it was going to be something similar to the day of the great harmony, but foreigner?

For now, let’s just inform Kim Min-hyuk later.

Once we gather up all information that were obtained so far, we will be able to get the big picture.

Finally, I purchased a suitable spear, several emergency foods and a huge quantity of toilet papers.

Toilet papers were, just like potions, treated as combat items, so they could not be purchased from the waiting room.

“Hee hang. I can even sell toilet papers. Hoooouuuwjae, you are toilet paper rich.”

Watching me purchasing a huge amount of toilet papers, Kiri Kiri made fun of me.

More the better, you rascal.

Do you have any idea how desperate one gets without toilet papers?

Having finished purchasing items, I got on the portal that lead to the 13th Floor’s waiting room.

“Have a safe trip! Buy me a cake next time!”

As always, she mentioned cake as she saw me off. I waved hand toward Kiri Kiri and activated the portal.

*

Kim Min-huk is... probably sleeping right now.

Looks like I'll have to tell him about the clues I got from Kiri Kiri tomorrow.

I opened the inventory and checked the magic textbooks.

Let's read these first.

I brought out the book that she said was about the basic magic theories.

The cover doesn't have anything written on the cover.

Let's read it anyway for now.

Like that, I opened its first page. I could not help but to panic.

The book only had one sentence written on it.

'To bring change to infinite time after death and finite time during life, what is the most important material that must be prepared? Find the answer.'

There was just that one sentence on the first page.

The rest was all blanks.

It appeared the book had over 200 pages, but there is just one sentence written on it...

What the hell.

On top of that, the sentence was a subjective question.

The most important material to bring change to time?

How would I know that?

For now, I decided to think hard about the answer to the question.

It said I should try to find the answer, so let's try finding it.

It could be that the empty space on the book will fill when I find the answer.

It is a magic textbook after all.

It was going to be boring to just think about it, so I decided to also test the newly acquired Fire Element Resistance Skill while at it.

I got out of the 13th Floor's waiting room and moved to the bonfire room.

I placed my hands on top of the bonfire and started thinking hard about the question. It was at that moment. A message came.

[Lee Hyung-jin, Fourth Floor: Big bro! I cleared the Third Stage!]

It was from Lee Hyung-jin.

He was hung up at the Third Floor, unable to try entering the boss room.

Honestly, regarding the Third Floor's boss room, the traps underneath the cloud bridge to be precise, even I didn't know much about them, so the situation was that I could not help him.

It seemed he somehow overcame them on his own.

[Lee Hyung-jin, Fourth Floor: The traps were like having all traps from first, second and third floors combined. There were no patterns. The arrows had poisons applied to them. The temperature got hot and cold repeatedly. Also, there were quite a few tricks mixed in too.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: You got through them still. Well done. Congratulations. You have accomplished something really

amazing, kid.]

I was always worried about him because of the Third Floor's boss room.

Unlike other people, I obtained the Blink Skill, which was a power skill from the gods, earlier in the floors. Because of Blink, I was able to go through the Third Floor's boss room with relative ease.

Because of how I got through the room, I didn't know exactly what kind of dangers were there underneath the cloud bridge.

I was worried that, other than myself, all challengers of the Hell Difficulty will not be able to go past the Third Floor.

However, Lee Hyung-jin cleared the Third Floor's boss room and obtained information about underneath the cloud bridge. This was a monumental accomplishment.

It was also great that Lee Hyung-jin successfully got past the Third Floor alive.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: Organize the information about the Third Floor's boss room later and put it up on the community. As for conquest walkthrough, let's try making one together later.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, Fourth Floor: Yes, Big Bro. I'll get it organized around tomorrow noon and post it.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, Fourth Floor: Big Bro, how is it like at the Fourth Floor?]

You will have a bit of trouble through the Fourth Floor too.

Lee Hyung-jin's combat style was closer to assassin or thief.

In boss rooms, he could apply his style to his advantage using his ability to make decisions. However, inside Stages, he will have to kill goblins in combat somehow.

Especially the goblin instructors are... Um.

I think they will be pretty tough.

I explained things about the Fourth Floor to Lee Hyung-jin and got up.

I put the magic textbook back in the inventory.

Let's study about the magic during the three-day waiting period when the round ends.

Perhaps it was because I just got the news from Lee Hyung-jin. I was a little excited.

I want to move.

I also want to challenge the 13th Floor soon and clear it.

Although I just cleared the 12th Floor, I cannot be satisfied with this.

I brought out weapons and armors from the inventory and wore them. I went straight to the 13th Floor's stage.

I was already burned at the 12th Floor once.

I wore the weapons and armors and carried the dimensional space bag on my back, which contained essential items. Like that, I entered the Stage.

Going past the bonfire room, I arrived at the 13th Floor Stage. It was a dark stone walled room.

[The 13th Floor's trial will start.]

Chapter 74 - Tutorial 13th Floor (2)

Going past the bonfire room, I entered the stage where long message opened in front of my eyes as soon as I entered.

[The 13th Floor's trial will start.]

Explanation: At the west of the Akan Continent, at a nameless volcanic island in middle of the ocean, there is a hidden temple of the monks who worship the God of Duel.

This temple is a secret place where monks trained to perfect their arts since ancient times.

Challenger, the one who belittles their life long dreams and talents and proclaims yourself as the true master of combat, achieve victory against the monks and prove your words.

[Clear condition]

Achieve victory from at least 15 rooms.

It looks like the 13th Floor is not that complicated.

The theme seemed to revolve around a main character of the

story pissing the hell out of the monks and fighting the duels against the monks to prove his words.

The setting about the main character belittling the monks could be the result of the God of Duel's negative impression about me.

It also means the challengers who had been receiving positive responses from the God of Duel would receive a large welcome here.

I think that's very plausible.

This is the first time for the theme of the Stage to have a story related to a god from the Tutorial.

From this Stage, I think I might be able to get some information about the gods of the Tutorial.

In this Stage, I need to achieve victories from at least 15 rooms.

I wonder how many rooms there are in total.

Let's go find out.

I looked around dark stone room.

There was nothing.

It was a dark space. There wasn't even a single candle light.

Silence.

It feels strange to not even hear the slight whistle of wind.

My senses already had surpassed that of human being. Still, I don't hear anything.

Does this room have sound proofing?

Towards the front, I can only see a small wooden door.

Besides that door, there was nothing here; it was as if the room was a prison cell.

The door had 'o' written on it.

Does it mean it is the room number o?

I opened the door and got out of the room number o.

Like the stone room, a dark corridor continued.

I walked for about five minutes, until I reached a wooden door at

the end of the corridor.

The door had the number '1' written on it.

It is the room number 1.

The setup's theme seemed to be the stone room and corridor repeated with the difficulty of the trial increasing with the number.

I opened the room number 1's door and entered it. A monk who was sitting in meditating position greeted me.

As if it was supposed to be obvious, the room was dark without a single candle light. However, the monk glared into my eyes.

[So, it is you, the arrogant one that the temple master spoke of.]

The monk got up as he said those words to me.

His hospitality to the guest is terrible.

I brought out a small lantern from the inventory and held it on my hand.

Although I had the effects from the night vision and eye light skills enabling me to maintain vision inside darkness, this was our

first meeting. I found the lack of proper lighting to be unacceptable.

I slowly observed the monk's appearance.

He was about two meters in height.

He was a hardened muscular man. He did not appear to be armed.

His clothes reminded me about monks from Tibet.

He didn't have any armors either.

One thing unique about him was that his fangs were reaching below his chin.

He is not human.

He had protruding facial features and red skin.

He looked like a demon from Japanese legends.

"I don't know who the arrogant one is. Anyway, don't you need weapons or armors?"

[As I thought, you are arrogant. Just what are you asking to a

monk who is seeking the ultimate height in art of fighting. Relying on such petty tools will only get in the way of the training. They will not help in true growth.]

This one sure likes to spew out nonsense.

I can understand the idea of not using weapons for a while for the sake of development.

However, weapons and armors should never be regarded petty tools.

Weapons were created and improved upon by humans to emerge victorious in wars and battles. They were the pinnacle of technology.

In this Tutorial, there were many things besides weapons made by humans. However, their purposes were all same.

Weapons were developed to attack and kill opponents.

How is anyone supposed to challenge the ultimate height in the art of fighting by excluding such weapons?

The ultimate height in the art of fighting; the meaning of the words is clear.

In the end, the only purpose of conflict is victory.

Achieving victory, one after the other... The destiny of certain victory could be said as the ultimate goal of any art of fighting.

[You are unenlightened. Victory is just one of the effects of the art.]

He is really stuck up. I don't think we can communicate.

Victory is everything.

Developing one's fighting ability is just a method towards victory.

Do you not understand why the name of the god that the monks, the ones who wishes to complete their art of fighting worship, is called the God of Duel?

[... How unpleasant. I won't listen to your ridiculous words no more. Wield the weapon that you think is so great. I shall start the test.]

“Why don't you just tell me the content of the test?”

I put the lantern back inside the inventory as I spoke.

[You just need to either defeat or kill me and go to the next room.]

That's simple.

I had a knife on my waist. I threw the knife toward the monk's face.

I quickly threw it. Because the knife was thrown so suddenly, the monk was not able to respond properly.

He managed to quickly swing his arm and sweep away the knife. However, the timing was too late.

The center of his weight was moving toward his back.

His back was further behind his knees. His shoulder was even further back.

As soon as I threw the knife, I charged forward and brought out the spear from the inventory.

Because of the spear's length, the monk quickly came within the striking distance.

As soon as the monk came inside the striking distance, I succinctly stabbed him with the spear.

The spear tip precisely pierced the monk's heart.

That was the end.

The monk bled from the hole in his chest and perished.

Monk, it looks like you won't be able to obtain things like the ultimate height in art of fighting.

I know this is the first room, but I am a little disappointed.

Hoping the second room would be able to satisfy me better, I opened the door and left the room number 1.

*

At the next room, and at the one after that, I was able to defeat monks with ease.

They were not able to catch up to my speed, so the results were obvious outcomes.

Finally, when I arrived at the fifth room, I was able to meet a monk that could somewhat catch up to my speed.

However, it was not enough to endanger my life.

Suuuguk...

Bleeding ferociously from his neck, the monk quickly fell back.

Was the cut a little shallow?

No, it wasn't.

I thrust my spear after considering the monk's movement.

Hm... If I didn't make a mistake, then...

Let's just go and check.

I approached the monk again and stabbed him.

This time, the tip of the spear definitely pierced the monk's neck.

I tried pressing hard on the monk's body that collapsed on the floor.

As I thought, the skin is tough.

Actually, I don't think calling it tough describes it well enough.

The skin is solid.

They're like iron plates.

Not just the skin, but the muscles underneath the skin and the bones were not like organic bodies. They felt like sheets of iron.

It was not like his body was really made of metallic parts, rather his body was simply as hard as metals.

Even his intestines had a surprising sturdiness.

It didn't seem like his body was made this way through training.

He was probably born with such a body.

This is intriguing.

I had been killing each of them with a single blow wrapped in mana by striking them at the critical points. Because of this, I had not noticed until now.

It is a great advantage to be born with such a sturdy body.

It can be overcome with skills, abilities and magic.

However, that's only when I am at a greater level than the opponent.

Against an opponent with similar levels in combat abilities, the one with superior basic stats will always win.

If two boxers of same skill levels fought, but one was a heavy weight and the other was a panther weight, it was obvious who would be the victor.

These bastards are born with such ridiculous bodies, yet they are ignoring the effectiveness of weapons as they are talking about completing their art?

It was completely illogical.

[God of Duel is doing a fake cough.]

It looks like that god is agreeing to some extent.

I sat there and observed the monk's corpse.

I don't know what the name of their kind is, but I should learn about their special characteristics.

As I pass each room, the monks' skill level increase noticeably.

The minimum clear condition is achieving victory from 15 rooms.

Around 15th room, a monk who is my equal in combat prowess might appear.

These are opponents I should be cautious against. I should collect more information to ensure my victory.

I performed an autopsy in detail and observed to determine if they had critical points on locations different from human's body or if they had different joint structures.

[God of Duel finds this unpleasant.]

[God of Slowness is sending wrath to someone.]

Even without the message telling me who it is, I think I know who the God of Slowness is angry at.

I don't care if you find it unpleasant or not. Just don't get in the way of someone's work.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Are you busy?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: I was until a moment ago.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: When did you get to the 13th Floor? Do you have a moment to talk?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Yes. What's up?]

Lately, Kim Min-hyuk really had no time, not even to catch a breath. So, he didn't have the time to have a proper conversation.

The last time we had a long conversation was when we met during the day of the great harmony.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: I found out some rough details about the mystery event.]

Oh... Already?

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: I also found out a little about the event.]

I was talking about the information I got from Kiri Kiri.

I gave him the clues, the foreigner and second.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Why are the clues so short? You... You got all other information first and used your leftover allowances to get them, didn't you?]

Tsk. This is why I hate bastards who are quick to notice things.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Still, they are new clues. I'll keep finding more about the event. Ah, I posted what I found about the event on the community, so check there.]

You already released it?

I think it might have been better if you released it after gathering more information.

I brought out a towel from the inventory and haphazardly wiped off the blood from my hands and arms. I left the fifth room.

I sat the corridor between the room number 5 and 6 and read the community forum while quenching my hunger.

First, I brought out a wide heat stone and a mug.

I poured milk into the mug and spread chocolate powder inside.

When I was in elementary school, they gave us milk in which I would put chocolate powder in it and drank it. I am not sure if it would taste similar.

I placed the mug on the heat stone and warmed up the milk.

Finally, I brought out a pack of dry bread crackers.

Until recently, I was fine with eating just meat jerkies. However, perhaps because of the memories from the 12th Floor, I want to eat something tasty.

Of course, it was not like I could recreate the delicious meals that Idy made.

To make something like that, I'll need skills related to cooking in addition to the ingredients.

Still, I don't want to keep on eating tasteless nutrients either.

In the end, this was what I came up with.

I decided to cook as much as I can within the bounds of being able to cook successfully.

I am not sure if I could call what I am doing right now as cooking, but...

I can at least pour the chocolate powder into milk and heat it on the heat stone.

Chapter 75 - Tutorial 13th Floor (3)

“Huuuuuuuu....”

The monk collapsed to the floor. He was not making even the slightest movements. I wiped off the blood from my cheek.

Now that I’m at the 15th room, the monk is definitely super strong.

[You have cleared the 13th Floor of the Hell Difficulty.]

[Would you like to continue?]

The message asked if I wanted to continue with the trial inside the floor.

This was my first time to see such a question.

The message appeared after I achieved the minimum condition for clearing the floor, which was 15 wins.

“Continue.”

Of course I should continue.

I have no idea when would be the end of the 13th Floor Stage, but let's try going as far as I can.

If possible, I should try going to the very end.

There weren't any new messages to my response.

There was no response as if they were telling me to do as I wish.

Now, if I want to stop challenging the floor and go get the reward, what am I supposed to do?

Would another message with the choice show up only after I clear a different room?

I brought out a potion from the inventory and applied it on my shoulder and arm where I had wounds. I opened the community while at it.

There was a message that arrived while I was in middle of the battle.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: Oh, what is it? Did something happen?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: No, it isn't because something happened. There was more information that came in about the competition.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: The information this time is that the competition will be held several times. We have not found out about how many times it will be held to conclude the competition.]

It will be held many times...

Perhaps it is not that the event is something that has to be held regularly. It could be that it is a time consuming event, so it was divided into several events.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: About what you found out last time, they were, foreigner, second, right?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: Right.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: During the second competition, I think we might meet foreigners.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: So there really was Tutorials on other countries.]

It was a question that came up in the community quite some time ago.

Why is everyone in the Tutorial Korean?

Of all countries on Earth, why just Korea?

Could it be that Tutorials are happening in other countries as well?

There were questions like that.

Because they could not confirm the answers, those questions were also the kind that people buried in back of their minds.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: I got it. I'll continue to find more information.]

I already cleared the 13th Floor. So, no matter how late I end up being, I should be able to get new information before the round ends.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: Looks like you will be busy for a while, even more so than now.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: I probably will. I'm saying this because of that. When the competition happens, can you command the guys at the normal difficulty?]

What? You want me to fill the role of the kindergarten teacher?

That's a little...

No, I hate it.

I clearly told Kim Min-hyuk that I hated the idea.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: No. I will not do it.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Hey, we are super busy. It is really serious. I am so busy that it is to the point where I wonder if I would die from overworking if I didn't drink potion.]

[Lee Ho-Jae, 13th Floor: No. Setting aside the fact that it is such a bother for me, the people will be afraid of me. Have you thought about that?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: If you are that concerned, why don't you ask Park Jung-ah for help?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: Even Park Jung-ah will be afraid?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Ugh, I don't know. You handle it.]

With that as last words, he didn't send any more messages.

Frustration was creeping up, but I squashed it.

Kim Min-hyuk probably was busy like crazy.

His head was probably about to explode from preparing for the

competition, and now there were too many new information coming in.

Now that we have confirmed the existence of Tutorials in other countries, this fact was going to be a big variable.

First, we have to acknowledge that the Tutorial's architects, managers and gods are recognizing the boundaries of the nations on Earth.

Depending on this, the reason behind Tutorial's existence and setting the goals for the players will be affected as well.

Kim Min-hyuk will try to organize all variables and try to write down the plans and operation methods for the Order of Vigilance.

He is the kind of man who won't be able to let things be unless he did.

Also, we need to be prepared for the time when we meet the challengers from the foreign countries.

Not all of them will try to follow the rules made by the Order.

Also, the Order will insist on the rules to everyone without exceptions.

As always, the Order of Vigilance will not make compromises.

Um... No. Now that I think about this, in situations like this, the Order's method of handling it had always been making threats with me as the vanguard.

Damn it. It looks like things will get annoying for me again.

If things get tangled up, just demonstrating our power was not going to be the end of it. It could even lead to collisions with the challengers from other countries.

I think there might be a reason why Kim Min-hyuk is asking me to take command of the people at the Normal difficulty.

All of the bosses of the Order, including Park Jung-ah, belonged to the Easy Difficulty.

Even the guard members, who were made up of rankers from Normal and Hard Difficulties, will all follow around Park Jung-ah.

As for the Hard Difficulty, Big Bro Jong-shik will take care of it on his own.

As for the Hell Difficulty... What kind of lunatic would pick fights with challengers of the Hell Difficulty?

On the other hand, in the Normal Difficulty, many of the rankers were busy with Order's work.

Kim Min-hyuk is saying that there will be gaps in their strength, so I should make up for that.

Even if that's not what this is about, there is nothing for me to lose from doing as Kim Min-hyuk asked.

I don't have a reason to think hard about this and get headache.

Ever since the first day of the great harmony ended and the Order of Vigilance was established, Kim Min-hyuk always worked hard to prepare for the uncertain future.

He was not satisfied with doing just that. He was showing the level of obsession that could be stated to be coming from paranoia.

If I was to explain that I was obsessed with my own growth and Park Jun-ah was obsessed with fighting and punishing criminals, I could say that Kim Min-hyuk was obsessed with making various measures prepared against all kinds of situations.

For now, I should take the command of the people at the Normal Difficulty as Kim Min-hyuk asked.

As for the detailed plan...

Let's think about that later.

I don't really need to think about this right now.

I got up from where I was sitting and headed to the 16th room.

While walking through the corridor, I thought about the weaknesses of the monks that I discovered so far.

There weaknesses were nothing extraordinary.

It was like simple negative side effects from having such tough bodies.

Their ability to make decisions and react quickly to rapidly changing situations declined severely in certain instances.

When they are shocked on their heads or when their visions are shaken, for a moment, they show gaps in defenses.

It seemed they were not used to being stunned like that because they had such sturdy heads.

They were also not very good at improvising and reacting in such situations.

They had one other weakness. They were rather lacking in experiences.

Even at a first glance, it seemed they had plenty of experiences in fighting against other monks, but it looked like they had no experience in fighting other beings.

Even just now, the monk complacently exposed his neck when we were close to each other.

I bit off his neck, obviously.

I wrapped my teeth with mana. I was able to bring out predator-like power with my teeth.

Of course, my mana had poison mixed in.

Like that, the duel was decided.

Of course, as I progressed to higher rooms, the monks' levels improved, and their weaknesses also got supplemented.

However, overall, the monks still showed such tendencies still.

As long as I keep these things in mind, I should be able to achieve victories from the rooms beyond.

*

Kwaaaang!

With great intensity, enough to collapse the ground, the monk stepped and rapidly approached me. I swung my spear toward the monk.

The monk lightly angled his head and dodged the spear.

Damn it. He is charging at me in such speed, yet he dodged my spear by looking? What nonsense.

When I swung it with all of my might...

Let alone dodging it, ordinary eyes should not even be able to follow its trajectory. This monk leisurely looked at it and dodged it.

I spun the spear once and stepped back.

The monk charged in to pursue me. I swung up the spear toward the monk's chin.

Again, the monk turned his head just enough to dodge the tip of the spear.

This is insane, seriously.

By the monk's kick, the spear left my hand and flew up toward the ceiling.

As soon as I lost the grip of the spear, I brought out the knife from the inventory and swung it toward the monk.

The monk's fist moved in bizarre pattern. It struck my wrist and stopped the knife. He then leisurely stepped back to gain distance.

Damn it. The monk was dusting off his hands as if he had a lot to spare. Watching him made me feel infuriated.

My chin feels numb.

Just now, at the moment I was bringing out the knife from the inventory, I was struck by a clean shot.

If the monk was not empty handed, if he was holding something as simple as a piece of a metal chopstick, I would have been critically wounded.

Actually, if the monk wanted to wound me critically, then regardless of having weapons or even Budda's hair, I might have gone for a sightseeing on the Jordan river.

Ever since the 15th room, the minimum requirement for clearing the Stage, the difficulty was rising like a crazy bitch.

All plans I thought of as I walked on the corridor beyond the 15th room, which relied on monks' weaknesses, were disposed of.

Since the 15th room, the monk's level changed completely.

Their physical abilities and skills were noticeably stronger.

They used quick speed to minimize unnecessary movements to the extreme and dealt precise strike.

I'm giving up the spear.

I brought out the shield from the inventory.

It's been a while to use the shield and knife combination.

Still, I am far more used to this than the spear.

In the past, I choose the gladius and shield as my starting equipment, and I did so to prepare myself for situations exactly like this.

Against opponents who can ignore the threat of the blade and fight casually...

Against opponents who can control the distance at will using their superior speed...

When I first entered the Tutorial, I had ordinary, or perhaps less

than ordinary physical abilities, so I needed to be prepared for such.

Regardless, against an opponent like this monk, I have to harden my defense with the shield and bring him within the range of the knife. I need to finish the battle in a single strike by piercing him in the critical point.

Against an opponent who is faster than me, this is the only method that works.

[Challenger... Will those be enough?]

The heavy and dignified voice of the monk echoed through the stone room.

Fuck. Why is his voice so cool for no reason?

That pisses me off.

These are not enough.

There is such a great difference in speed. Just changing the weapon couldn't possibly make up for the difference so easily.

[Challenger... You probably should demonstrate your full power. You must not ruin this duel with your foolish pride.]

“Why are you being so considerate? I don’t get it. Are you saying that while being aware of the fact that the 18th room’s monk is unconscious on the floor after saying the same thing you were saying?”

If I was him, I would not have shown useless consideration toward the opponent who was having his weakness exposed. I would have persistently bit on to the weakness and end the duel.

[Challenger... He had done nothing wrong. Also, I am merely making the same choice as him.]

“... Because being victorious is not the important part?”

[That’s right. Instead of the desire for victory, what’s more important is getting closer to the completion of our art through this duel, even if it is only a little bit further.]

I don’t understand at all.

I’ve heard this many times already.

Every monk I have met so far said something similar.

However, I don’t understand.

I spat out the blood collecting inside my mouth.

I really don't want to acknowledge this fact, but it is about time I did.

This is as far as I can go with my abilities.

With my abilities, I cannot handle that monk's speed.

I looked at the number written on the wooden door once again.

19th room.

This place is the limit of my abilities.

I should remember this.

[Perseverance]

[Your combat abilities are increased by a small margin in proportion to the strength of the opponent.]

[Your combat abilities are increased by a small margin in proportion to your exhaustion and injuries sustained.]

I activated the Perseverance Skill.

Actually, this skill was originally a passive skill that activated automatically when criteria were met.

However, Idy claimed that the caster should be able to control the skill no matter how great the Perseverance skill is.

While I was at the 12th Floor's Stage, by repeating duels against Idy, I was able to succeed in determining a method to activate and deactivate the Perseverance Skill.

Having realized how to do it, I was able to control it with ease ever since.

The control method was a matter of will regarding the skill's activation.

[Battle Focus]

[Soul Steal]

I also activated both the Battle Focus and Soul Steal.

“Now, let's try this again. As you want, I'll demonstrate my best.”

[I was waiting for this. Come.]

On the monk's face, he didn't just have moments to spare. He was even reflecting emotion of joy.

[Blink]

I used the Blink and moved to right in front of the monk's nose. I tried to stab his neck with the knife.

The monk responded still despite the fact that it was an approach using the Blink.

The monk dodged the knife's edge and came in for the counter. I focused on the monk's fist.

With the Battle Focus' effect, I was inside slowed down world.

I can clearly see the monk's fist flying toward my face.

However, judging from the speed of the fist, I won't be able to dodge it perfectly.

In that case, I need to think of the next move.

I confirmed the trajectory of the fist and moved my head.

I let go of the shield on my left hand and positioned my body forward.

[Iron Wall]

Clank!

My cheek was instantly fortified by the effect from the Iron Wall Skill. The monk's fist scratched past my cheek.

Just like how one could deflect an enemy's weapon by positioning the shield at an angle instead of causing a direct impact, I succeeded in deflecting the monk's fist by having it graze my face.

Although the fist and my face merely grazed past each other, sound of metallic screeching could be heard. Also, sparks were generated from the scratched surface.

The monk's fist went past my face and continued on far beyond the back of my face.

The monk tried to quickly retrieve his fist and back out, but it was too late.

Unlike the monk, who was trying to respond too late, I already predicted the situation will lead to this ever since I saw his fist coming at me earlier.

My left hand, which had let go of the shield, was grabbing on to

the monk's clothes.

My right hand, which was holding the knife, was moving toward the monk's heart.

Chapter 76 - Tutorial 13th Floor (4)

[19th Room]

[That was a great duel, Challenger.]

I don't think I can agree to that.

The duel ended in just ten seconds after I started to use Skills.

Could this really be called a good duel?

[I have learned a lot from fighting this duel. I think I'll be busy for a long while.]

The monk was breaking into laughter as I looked at his face, dumbfounded.

Unbelievable...

The monk collapsed to the floor, gushing blood from his chest.

Although the knife went halfway into his chest, it seemed that he was not having any trouble carrying on a conversation.

“You will be busy for a long while you say? Is there a reason why you are certain I won't kill you right now?”

[I do not. However, that won't be bad either.]

What a crazy bastard.

“What a crazy bastard.”

I mumbled curses as I walked past the monk.

The monk already acknowledged defeat and no longer wished to fight. It does not feel right to kill him.

If I was like my usual self, I would have killed anyone and anything on sight, saying it is for the experience points.

It's strange. I'm making a different decision than the usual.

Is it because the monks looks similar to humans?

I remembered Idy strongly advising me not to judge others based on appearances.

Someone's life was not more or less precious because of one's resemblance to a human being.

However, I don't think that's why I'm feeling like this.

It is not the first time that I met enemies who look like humans.

I already had killed some of the monks in the 13th Floor Stage as I progressed to the higher rooms with 19 wins.

I think I killed about five of them.

I am not sure.

It didn't feel right. I walked past the monk. I opened the door and was about to leave the room; at that moment, the monk said,

[Challenger, you should be careful from the 20th room and beyond. Let me give you an advice. I recommend that you close your eyes.]

... Seriously, geez.

“In the middle of the battle, try predicting the opponent's movements and thoughts. You guys are too obsessed with perfecting the form of the moves. However, in the end, isn't your art of fighting built for the sake of fighting the opponent?”

[Uuhuhuhu. Thank you for that reply. I am grateful for the advice. Unlike the Master Monk's words, you are not completely lacking in manners.]

I left the 19th Room, and the message appeared again.

[Would you like to continue?]

Yep.

I closed the 19th Room's wooden door and took a moment at the corridor to think.

Am I insane?

Was I attacked psychologically?

I felt around the wall and checked the response from the mana.

The ceiling, walls, floor... There was no response.

This place was a Stage inside the Tutorial.

Everything was going to be reset when the next Round began.

The dead monks would be revived, and they would also lose all of their memories from the last round.

So, why am I doing something so meaningless?

I had told myself this before.

I told myself that I would not treat life carelessly even if they are monsters and that they are going to be revived after the round restarts.

I told myself that I should not enjoy killing them like a video game.

My vow was not about being a pacifist.

If it was for clearing a Stage or for further developing my power, I have been killing enemies without hesitation plenty of times.

Many times, I repeated the challenges and killed the same enemies over and over.

Back then, when I was fighting and slaughtering them, I never felt any sense of regret or sympathy toward them.

However, what was that earlier?

[The God of Adventure is paying attention to you.]

[God of Slowness is paying attention to you.]

... I don't know.

Perhaps I am simply being whimsical.

Damn it all. I think I should go find a player who used to be a psychologist.

*

[20th Room]

[Welcome, Challenger. You must have gone through a lot to get this far.]

The 20th Room's monk welcomed me.

The further the room, the monks seemed to be stronger and more welcoming.

Could it be that this Stage's theme calculates increases in strength and politeness in conjunction with the room number?

[Sit for a while. It will take you some time to get used to this as well.]

As the monk said, I just plummeted to the floor.

The 20th Room's environment was very strange.

The rooms so far were all enveloped in utter darkness without a single candle light.

However, the darkness inside the 20th Room was a little different.

This is no ordinary darkness.

Something is blocking my view.

Is it magic? I don't sense any magical energy response.

This is as if... It feels similar to the sensation from a Power Skill.

This is my first time experiencing such extreme darkness.

I rubbed my eyes and looked forward.

The monk must be within a few steps, yet I cannot see him.

I focused on my sight and stared for a while, but I couldn't see

the monk at all.

Let alone the monk, I couldn't even see my hands very well.

This must be why the last monk said I should just close my eyes.

I tensed my mana.

I activated the Detection Skill, allowing me to see the monk's appearance and location.

It would be hard to fight him with just this.

[You don't need to cringe so much. I am in the same condition, aren't I?]

"You must have stayed here for days. How is that the same condition?"

[Uuuhurhur. That is the fate dealt to you, Challenger.]

Did I say something funny?

I thought about how I carefully observed the surface of the target of the detection with mana when I was training on the Detection Skill.

By doing the same thing, I could see the monk's location and appearance, and even the fine detail of his clothing and facial expressions.

I was quite used to the mana operation now, so I was able to do it without difficulty after focusing my mind for a moment.

The problem was that carrying out a combat while maintaining this was a whole other matter.

I got up.

[Will you be all right? You are probably not used to this yet. I can wait a little longer for you. I want to have the duel after you have completely adapted to this room's environment.]

"I am sorry, but let's cut the chit-chat. I need to maintain focus."

Having heard what I said, the monk got up silently and took a stance.

I focused on the monk's appearance and brought out the backsword.

I think this will be tough.

Too much of my mental focus is being spent on the mana operation for the Detection Skill.

I need to finish this by focusing on using Power Skills, which do not drain my mental focus.

First, I closed my eyes.

I can't see very well with my eyes at the moment anyway, so it is just disrupting my focus.

It would be better for me to close my eyes and focus on things being detected through mana.

I felt somewhat angry at the 19th Room's monk's advice, which was frustratingly correct.

[Soul Steal]

As soon as I applied the deteriorating effect of the Soul Steal on the monk, I used Blink, emerging next to the monk's side.

Because I couldn't be certain about the distance measured, instead of the front, I chose the side.

I swung the sword, aiming at the monk's neck. The sword cut through the air.

Damn it. In a space like this, he can sense my movement which was done through Blink?

Through the mana operation, I focused on the monk who lowered his body and dodged the sword's edge. Watching it gave me severe dizziness.

Desperately holding on to the mana operation, I squeezed out all of my mental focus.

The monk's knuckles were flying in.

It was too late to dodge it.

I raised my shield and blocked it.

Kwang~

It sounded like a cannonball drop. My body was thrown against my back and collided with the wall.

Kuuuuuhec...

I was shocked again when my body collided with a wall.

As for my shield... I cannot see it, but it was probably shattered.

[Challenger...]

The monk opened his mouth again.

He is probably going to say something like we should fight after I got more used to this darkness.

I put the shield and backsword in the inventory and raised my mana.

[Talaria's Wings]

I summoned the Talaria's Wings and motioned them to surround my entire body. I raised my arms and crossed them to protect my head.

[Blink]

Like that, I used the Blink and collided with the monk.

Talaria's Wings absorbed the initial shock. However, I had to withstand the secondary shock in full when my body collided with Talaria's Wings.

Damn it. I don't remember when the last time I resorted to this kind of suicide method was.

I was shocked, but it was far better than what the monk must have gotten.

I got a grip first and threw the knife at the monk who was thrown off to the distance.

Surprisingly, despite being in middle of all this, the monk precisely struck the knife with lower edge of his hand.

[Blink]

However, he was not able to block my hand which I thrust at him after using the Blink again.

The mana, which was surrounding my hand like a sharp knife, tore through the monk's skin.

The monk twisted his body and kicked.

This is dangerous.

[Battle Focus]

Damn it. I even used the Battle Focus... Let alone dodging it, I cannot even block it.

I saw it too late.

It appeared to be a reverse kick.

I didn't even get to see most of his motions.

Because I was trying to sense such twisting movement through mana, I was unable to immediately identify the target point and respond.

It was not that there was a problem in operating mana. After I successfully attacked the monk, my mental focus faltered.

[Iron Wall]

My waist was about to be struck by the monk's kick. I focused mana on the area.

I just need to endure this.

I disengaged Battle Focus.

This is no time to be maintaining Battle Focus for long.

Kwang!

I was thrown to the back again and collided with the wall.

Wuuuuaaaaaac.

A fluid ejected from my mouth. I wiped it off and focused on the

monk and my body again.

First. My body... the ribs are cracked.

Soon, the pain will slowly emerge.

Other than that, I don't have any injuries that would hinder my movements.

The monk is charging toward me.

He is already infected by the Poison Energy from the mana earlier.

I can win. I just need to hold out.

I flipped the grip of the knife on my left hand. On my right hand, I held the backsword.

I have not used dual wielding that many times.

Instead of using both arms offensively, I am going to use the left hand, which is wielding the knife, as a replacement for shield.

I am an expert at this.

There probably are only few people out there who can use an arm

as the broken shield as well as I can.

[Huuuuuaaaap!]

Shouting, the monk was charging at me. I thought about trying to get used to this space as I watched him run toward me.

*

Huuuuuuu.

As I thought, this is the best method for getting used to things.

Once the situation has been created in that being unable to adapt would result in certain death, the body will always adapt to the condition in order to survive.

Infected by poison, the monk was running amok and charging at me to end the duel before the poison could be fatal.

To block and parry his attacks, I had to adapt to this space somehow and accurately detect the monk's movements.

Of course, I succeeded.

“With this, the duel is decided, right?”

[That's right. It was a great duel, Challenger.]

Do you think so?

You were poisoned, and your opponent was gutlessly avoiding and blocking your attacks to draw out the fight. You were chasing me like a madman, and now, you ended up in a pathetic state of being unable to move.

If I was that monk, would I accept this as a good duel?

Thinking that, I put the empty potion bottle back in the inventory.

The monk coughed and threw up blood.

The poison is probably quite strong.

I brought out an antidote from the inventory.

“It's an antidote. If you answer my questions, I'll give this to you.”

[If it is something I can tell you, then...]

You are in that state, yet you are adding a condition while sitting around?

Wait, you are lying around.

“How many rooms are in this place?”

[There are 33 rooms. The Master Monk will be at the very last room.]

33...

That’s more than I thought.

[Is that the end of your questions?]

“No. I have one more.”

Actually, this is the reason why I’m putting the antidote up as the reward.

“How do I adapt to this space? Tell me.”

[Challenger, it seemed you were already pretty well-adapted?]

“Not as well as you have. I want to hear your method.”

[In other words, you want me to summarize the fundamentals of

my art and hand them over to you.]

“If you don’t want to, then fine. In that case, no antidote for you.”

[Uuhurhurhur. I’ll tell you. If you are intending on challenging the next room, then you will have to learn this properly.]

I poured in antidote to the monk’s mouth.

Before long, having drunk the antidote, the monk sat down and checked his body.

You sure recover quickly.

Your body really is unbelievable.

[Now then, shall we start?]

You want to start right away?

“Let’s start after resting for a bit.”

[Won’t it be better to move right away? It would be easier to master this while you still have the same sensation you felt during the battle.]

I know what you are saying, but...

I can't right now.

“It's time for me to eat.”

*

[You acquired Mana Circuit Lv. 12]

[You acquired Detection Lv. 7]

[You acquired Battle Focus Lv.20]

Chapter 77 - Tutorial 13th Floor (5)

[20th Room]

“How far could I go?”

[Probably up to about the 25th Room.]

25th Room?

I was overestimating a higher number.

I got pretty used to the space already. I also have learned a lot in the process too.

[The height you will face from the 26th Room and beyond will be different.]

“Are you talking about the environmental challenges or the power of the monks?”

[The latter. If you do overcome the 26th Room, then you probably will be able to get to the 29th Room.]

“What’s the problem with the 30th Room now?”

[Environmental challenge.]

Ugh.

What a filthily hellish difficulty.

I'm getting frustrated all of sudden.

This Hell Difficulty does not know the meaning of enough.

I complained by myself and got up, followed by the monk.

[Are you going to go now?]

"I should. I have a long way to go."

[First, I must say that the canned soup that you made was very delicious.]

That's good.

I was slightly concerned that it would not suit his tastes.

[Also, I want to say that I enjoyed talking to you. I will look forward to the day when we will meet again.]

We won't ever meet again.

I already beat the 15th Room and cleared the Stage.

Even if this round ends, I'll be moved to the 14th Floor's waiting room because the clear condition was still met.

I won't have the chance to challenge the 13th Floor again.

Also, even if I could challenge the stage again and meet this monk again, he wouldn't remember me.

When the round resets, it will be as if he never met me.

“Well then, I'll get going.”

For some reason, I had a sudden loathing to say goodbye and leave.

Did we get close already?

It was worrying.

For some reason, I was anxious. So, I hastily got out of the room and closed the door without even looking back.

[Will you continue?]

Of course.

The monk said the 25th Room or the 30th Room would be my limit. However, I do not agree with his words.

You never know until you try.

It's not like I got this far because I was overflowing with confidence for victory.

*

[24th Room]

[Challenger, you were still not used to the reach of the spear. Abandoning the spear's advantage and throwing your body to force damage on both sides is not quite a good method. Also, you have the habit of putting your left foot first when you are making that choice.]

I was about to leave the 24th Room when the monk advised me with his back turned.

That was valuable advice.

They were so important that I felt awkward about just leaving without a word.

For a moment, I contemplated a suitable reply. However, I dismissed the thought.

“Thank you.”

[Uuhurhurhurhur. There’s no need.]

[Would you like to continue?]

Of course.

There’s no need to ask anymore.

Regardless of my chances, I intend to go all the way to the 33rd Room.

As I walked toward the 25th Room through the corridor, I organized my thoughts.

Numerous problems still bothered me.

They were important problems. Adding onto their importance, depending on how I resolve them, many things could change.

However, this is not the time for me to hold such troubling thoughts in my head.

All monks I have met so far said that the 25th Room will be tough.

I need to focus on fighting the monk at the 25th Room.

I eradicated the distracting thoughts and focused my senses to prepare myself.

When I became certain that my senses focused and ready, I opened the 25th Room's wooden door and entered.

[Welcome, Challenger.]

I entered the room, and the monk greeted me. I looked at the monk thoroughly.

Appearance-wise, he didn't look very different from the monks earlier.

“Shall we start now?”

[Now? Um. I guess that would be fine. Challenger, it seems you are pretty used to this space.]

“It’s been the same since the 20th Room, so it is about time I got used to it.”

[Uuhurhur. Usually, getting used to it so fast is not possible. Also, there were dense ones who needed to get adapt to the room’s environment again after walking through the corridor which does not have the darkness.]

“How dense does one have to be to do that? Do people like that need to adapt again each time after entering the room?”

[That’s right. Actually, most challengers are like that.]

Other challengers...

He is probably not talking about the Tutorial Hell Difficulty’s 13th Stage. He is most likely talking about the temple at the west of the continent that worships the God of Duel.

I suddenly feel curious about this place’s story.

What kind of history and memory do these people have? Why do the challengers come? What do they gain?

I was about to open my mouth to satiate my curiosity. However, I

changed my mind.

I closed my mouth again and asked myself.

Am I really that curious about them?

What happened to the promise I made to myself to I will focus on the duel against the monk earlier?

Could it be that I am not actually curious about their story, but...

I just want to have a conversation with that monk?

[Um? Are you all right? Challenger, you don't look so good.]

It felt like my sanity was crashing down.

I had been thinking that my behaviors lately were strange. I have been acting like that because I was too lonely.

So, I was feeling joy from the act of having a conversation with someone.

Out the blue, I was facing my fragility. It concerned me.

I had been aware that I was not that healthy mentally.

I was also well aware that I was suffering from loneliness.

I knew I like Kiri Kiri, Kim Min-huk, Park Jong-shik and others who are willing to have a conversation with me and smile because of that reason.

However, I didn't think I would take interest in the enemies and find joy from feeling connections because of my loneliness.

I didn't think I would show myself so thoughtlessly unguarded toward the enemies.

I wonder how many times I would have died so far if the monks were not so friendly toward me.

As I thought about this, I remembered the incidents of near death. I should have died in those moments.

I felt like I just wanted to scream.

[Challenger, are you all right? Take a seat and calm your breathing.]

Instead of doing as the monk said, I brought out my backsword.

I won't be able to subdue this chaos in my mind when I have that monk in front of me, I thought.

“... No. I’ll finish this duel and then either talk or organize my thoughts.”

[Uuhurhur. It looks like you are confident about winning. Well then, go ahead.]

[God of Adventure is cheering for you.]

[God of Slowness is watching you.]

The reactions from the God of Adventure and God of Slowness came as always.

I knew they would show up.

There was a time when I thought the two gods wanted the same things from me.

However, now, I am aware that they each want the opposite things from me.

The choice I’ll make in the future... I wonder what kind of choices I would make and which god I would please with my

choices.

At the moment, I am not sure.

For now, I should focus on the task at hand. I'll think about that later.

[Soul Steal]

*

Pang!

This is insane.

I think I finally understand why the monks I met in the past all said the 25th Room will be hard, repeating the same line over and over.

The monk was calm and had his hands flat together. He then moved the hand and punched the empty air with his knuckles.

After that...

Kwang!

The shockwave of mana erupted out.

I quickly threw my body to the side to dodge the shockwave.

What is this, a palm blast?

Was that a palm blast?

The shockwave collided with the wall with a loud noise.

Pieces of rubbles from the wall poured down.

I even thought that perhaps the wall might collapse and cause the entire room to cave in.

It was incredibly powerful. Getting hit by it directly once probably will send me to my grave.

I think I might die instantly if I get hit the wrong way.

The monk was discharging shockwaves by the bucketload.

Using the Blink to dodge the shockwave is a waste.

I'll just get exposed to another shot afterwards.

I should use the Blink for attacks and dodge the shockwaves with

by moving.

I moved after I saw that the monk was taking a stance again to launch a shockwave.

Let's make this a battle of speed.

Pang!

I threw my body to the side and dodged the incoming palm blast.

Like that, I hastened my speed and ran around the monk in a circle.

With vision being useless, the monk and I had to rely on the detection through the mana in this space.

Let's see if the monk's detection skill can follow my speed.

As my speed increased, the Wind Spirit's Blessing Skill's acceleration effect was applied.

Now, it became harder for me to run around in circle inside this small room because of my increased velocity.

Pang!

Again, the palm blast was launched.

It seemed that he shot it while predicting my trajectory. However, the shockwave only passed by my back.

I squatted then jumped up.

I landed on the wall perpendicularly, my feet on the wall.

With the momentum I had with my speed earlier, I can stay on the wall in this stance for a moment.

I focused on my leg and back.

I need to squeeze out all of my mana and muscular strength.

Like a spring expanding after compression, I kicked the wall and launched myself toward the monk like an arrow.

The monk was not able to follow my speed completely. However, he did respond by raising his arms to guard against the direction I was flying towards him.

Kwuang!

The backsword I swung and the monk's arm collided.

It was a collision of mana, generating a shockwave.

My body was being pushed back by the shockwave.

Damn it.

As soon as I landed, I raised the backsword again and aimed it at the monk.

I knew that the monks did not attack in a situation like this.

However, that did not mean I could just take it easy and remain defenseless either.

I have to always stay focused and stay sharp.

I had survived that way, and I could survive this only if I did.

Again, I ran around the monk in circle and threw my body towards a wall.

I kicked the wall and charged at the monk just like the last time.

The monk tried to stop my attack using the same stance.

Perhaps because this was the second time I tried this, it seemed the monk's stance looked a little more stable.

[Battle Focus]

Because I had to raise mana as a replacement for my vision, I cannot maintain the Battle Focus for long.

I have to make this attack count.

I was inside a world that was so slow that it felt like the time actually stopped. I was flying toward the monk very gradually, slowly at a snail's pace.

Meanwhile, I could check my stance.

I was flying through the air like an arrow.

It was obvious that my sword swing stance was ruined.

Maintaining the Battle Focus, I made a miniscule adjustment to my stance before I collided with the monk.

At the moment the sword and the monk's arm collided, I focused on the moment when the shockwave was generated.

It was about grasping a split-second moment.

Using the Battle Focus, I forcibly raised my focus to the extreme.

With this, it is possible to grasp that single moment.

Kwuaang!

With the sword and the monk's arm as the center, I saw that the shockwave was being generated. I immediately used the skill.

[Blink]

I used it twice in a row and got to the monk's back.

Blink Skill was not just a quick movement skill.

One special attribute of this skill was that all momentum was extinguished once the movement was complete.

Therefore, the shock from the collision became nullified with the Blink's special attribute, and I was currently holding the position behind the monk. I can attack the monk's back without any hindrance.

On the other hand, the monk is getting the shock from the collision up front.

I thrust the sword into the monk as deeply as possible, and the strike tore the monk's back skin.

I was intending to pierce through the monk if possible. However, all it did was tear his skin.

Because of the shock from the front and his attempt to quickly turn his body to dodge the stabbing attack from the back, the monk lost balance.

He was in middle of the collision, yet he turned his body after detecting my movement to the back and the attack.

Just what kind of a fiend is he?

The monk stumped on the floor hard, generated loud noise, and flew away before stopping only after running into a wall.

Surprisingly, the monk got up as if that was nothing.

He was bleeding on his back from the tears in his skin, but other than that, he was the same as he was when I first met him when entered the 25th Room.

It seemed the monk was examining his body. He was standing still for a moment. The monk said,

[Is it poison?]

“That’s right. It’s poison. If you leave it be, you could die in five minutes. Ah, I guess it may not be fatal if it is you. Still, you won’t

be able to continue fighting regardless.”

[Uuhurhurhur. It is interesting. This is my first time experiencing a duel like this. I will lose if I don’t defeat you within the time limit. However, if I rush around without making any progress, the poison will spread faster.]

“That’s right.”

[Uuhurhurhur. This is quite enjoyable.]

“All other monks said the same.”

The monk was laughing about it once again. Watching the monk, I reminisced.

The monk who I met at the 20th Room said the monk at the 25th Room will be a great challenge. He also said that the 30th Room will be the next challenge if I got past the 25th Room.

If I can hold out just for five minutes, it looks like I won’t have problems until the 29th Room at least.

[Well then! Since we don’t have time, let’s get started right away! Looks like I should be the one to attack now, uuhurhurhur!]

While laughing with deafeningly loud voice that filled the room, the monk was charging at me. Reactively, I corrected my stance.

Chapter 78 - Tutorial 13th Floor (6)

[25th Room]

It's to the right.

I quickly raised my arm and blocked the shockwave that was emanating from my right. I was pushed far to the back.

Fortunately, I didn't end up falling and rolling on the ground.

My arm was also safe because I used the Iron Wall Skill.

Pang!

I moved my body immediately and dodged the trajectory of the palm blast.

I need to force the battle into close range if I am to fight that monk.

When there's distance, the monk throws his fist around in the air freely without any hindrance while I have to dodge an endless barrage of shockwaves.

If this continued, I will eventually get hit before the monk

collapses from the poison.

I could probably win if I draw the fight out, but I still have to charge into that monk and close the gap to ensure my victory.

I charged toward the monk's chest and swung my fist.

All of my weapons were either broken or scattered on the floor somewhere.

All I have left is hand-to-hand combat.

The monk has superior body in comparison to mine.

He also has greater reach.

He is also a lot more used to this darkness than me.

I am disadvantaged in three different ways, but the monk is infected by the poison.

So, I will win if I just hold out.

The monk's movements are too rigid.

He is not being flexible in his responses to the opponent's moves.

He does not try to hide the intent of his moves by doing strange things either.

He just thoroughly executes the fighting art form that he knows.

So, if I recognize the monk's stance and miniscule movements in his muscles, I can predict the angle of his attack and respond to it accordingly.

I have two advantages.

[Sensory Amplification]

I approached the monk and used the skill.

In a moment like this, even if it is just a miniscule buff, I should raise my senses further and predict the monk's movements.

Usually, I do not use this skill often because its duration is too short. However, it is extremely important right now.

I looked at the movements of the monk's shoulder, waist, knees and right arm's muscles, eventually discerning the monk's intentions

I have experienced his move several times already.

It's a knuckle strike aimed at my heart.

I quickly lowered my body and adjusted my left hand to block his fist from the side. I closed in the gap.

Pang!

A shockwave was generated from the left side and struck the side of my head.

I think my eardrums are going to burst.

For now, I ignored the damage and attempted to execute my plan.

My right fist jolted forward to strike the left side of the monk's stomach.

This is the stomach, the opposite side of where the poison wound is on the back.

The monk instantly changed his stance and stopped my fist.

It was not that he saw my prior moves and predicted this. He didn't predict my plan either.

He merely saw the fist flying at him and then moved his stance to respond.

No matter how I think about it, that was an insane reaction speed.

The monk snatched my arm and threw me to the ground like a Judo practitioner.

[Blink]

Just before I collided with the ground, I used Blink to the same spot.

With this, although I won't be going anywhere, I wouldn't experience the impact because of Blink negated momentum.

I raised my body in that state and smacked the monk's face with my left hand.

I didn't take a proper stance. I just swung my fist. Still, it hit his face square.

This was the first time to successfully hurt the monk with a direct attack.

The monk has weakened a lot.

The poison is running through his body, so it is obvious.

Because of the shock on his head, the monk was not able to take a proper stance. I charged at the monk and pushed his body over.

Because the monks had such sturdy bodies, they had a tendency to be slow in response when their head experienced trauma.

The monk fell on the floor. I became certain as I mounted his body.

I won.

*

[30th Room]

[Welcome, Challenger. It's been a long time since I've seen anyone coming this far.]

As I listened to the monk's greeting, I checked the change in senses.

It was the tactile sensation.

Since the 20th Room, the rooms had a strange darkness that completely blocked my vision. Now, it even paralyzed my sense of touch.

It is really strange.

Is this how it feels to being completely anesthetized yet able to walk around somehow?

I raised my hand and felt around my face.

My senses were effectively nulled; my face, hand, or the arm and shoulder that supported the hand did not seem to exist.

This strange lack of sensation generated unfamiliar fear in me.

It felt like I was swimming in deep sea.

[Are you alright, Challenger?]

Having heard the monk, I got a grip of myself.

“You said it’s been awhile since seeing someone making this far, right?”

[I did, Challenger. Is there something you are curious about?]

I was so glad that I could still hear him.

I can still talk properly.

“Ah... ah.”

I tried making noises again.

Although I could not feel my lips, tongue, neck and vocal cords from moving, I was making proper sounds through my voice.

That fact felt mysterious somehow.

“How many... challengers... challengers were... were there before me...”

Damn it.

[Uuhurhurhur! You sure talk funny. First, try getting used to this place a little more.]

When I talked without thinking about the room’s mysterious effects, I pronounced the words as my body remembered. However, when I tried to talk while being conscious about the room, the pronunciations got tangled up.

I feel so embarrassed.

[Experiences like this are probably not common. Enduring the conditions of this place is great training by itself. First, I recommend that you take time and wait until you get used to this place.]

As the monk said, I quietly went to a corner of the room and sat down.

I cannot even feel the floor.

With my eyes closed, I can't even tell if I am sitting down or lying down.

Actually, since I can't see anything even with my eyes open, it is the same.

As I spent the time to get used to the place, I decided to organize my thoughts.

That monk is not attacking me.

He has made a strange decision, but it is a definite fact.

I have confirmed this several times as I sat in the 30th Room.

I should have plenty of time to peacefully organize my thoughts.

This place paralyzed the sense of touch, which created a good environment for me to focus my thoughts.

I slowly thought about the actions I took since I entered the 13th Floor's Stage.

At first, my attitude was more or less the same as before I got here.

Like I always have, I had desire for experience points and growth. Also, I was curious about new Stage.

However, as I met the monks and conversed with them, my attitude changed little by little.

I laughed at their philosophy in the beginning, but that was only for a short while. I was intrigued from having conversations with them. It was interesting to learn new things by exchanging ideas with them.

I reminisced, recognizing that I was feeling very lonely at the moment. With that in consideration, I realized that my behavior was not all that weird.

It was not weird for a lonely person to become close quickly with someone who he could have conversations about a topic of mutual interest and enjoy it.

The problem was that the monks were the enemies in this stage that I had to defeat regardless. Also, the other problem was that I had inadvertently lowered my mental guard.

I guess there are about two problems.

I don't need to worry too much about the first one.

These monks are definitely very welcoming toward the challengers, and they seem to enjoy having conversations with the challengers.

On top of this, they never attack the opponent by taking advantage of the moment when the opponent's guard is down.

Again, this is something I confirmed from meeting many different monks.

Also, I am maintaining enough alertness to respond should the monk attack me suddenly while having a conversation.

Of course, I think it would be a serious problem if I became this lax even when facing enemies who are not monks.

I should not let that happen.

The second problem crept up to me because I never diagnosed myself accurately.

I have two weaknesses. I am currently extremely lonely, and I am opening up too easily to the ones who seem accepting.

At first, I was not aware of these weaknesses.

I cannot fix them right now, but now that I am aware of it at least, I won't have to worry about being too close to them and panicking afterwards.

I should watch out from now on.

This should be enough.

I have not organized all of my thoughts, but I don't feel as uneasy.

Now, I should focus on what to come.

First, let's try adapting to this space.

*

[32nd Room]

[Challenger, then try going to the next room. The Master Monk will be waiting. I hope you pass the final trial.]

The monk was saying words of farewell. I looked at the monk and expressed my sincere gratitude for his match.

[Would you like to continue?]

Of course.

I opened the 32nd Room's door and entered the conjoining corridor. My vision and sense of touch came back alive.

Surprisingly, I felt burdened by the senses. How strange...

First, I checked the time.

[Round 15, Day 27, 07:30]

I had been worrying about the time, but I was not as late as I thought.

I was able to pass the 30th Room to the 32nd Room with far greater ease than I anticipated.

It was not anything special.

It was just that the monks in those rooms were not well-adapted to the conditions of their own room.

The monks focused on maintaining their art form to the perfection and executing their movement.

Because of this, not being able to sense their own body's movement became a huge penalty.

On the other hand, I didn't give a damn about the perfection of my movements. I only cared about charging in and attacking successfully.

I was able to move more freely than them.

Also, after some time passed, I was able to adjust to the conditions with greater ease than the monks.

Eventually, I was able to get through the rooms from 30th to the 32nd Room.

In fact, I felt that the rooms that came before them were harder.

I grabbed hold of the door handle ring of the 33rd Room.

Finally, this is the very last room.

As soon as I entered the room, I could not help but panic from my senses being paralyzed.

Of course, I was aware that my senses would be paralyzed.

However... I didn't know all senses would be paralyzed at the same time.

Vision, touch, smell, hearing, and taste...

All senses were paralyzed.

[Welcome, Challenger. I am this temple's master.]

Instead of having my body's nerves removed, it felt more like I lost my body itself. I was panicking. At that moment, the Master Monk's voice echoed inside my head.

How is he able to communicate to me?

Also, how did I hear that?

[Little by little, you will find out. There is no need to be in such rush. Try looking around.]

As the Master Monk said, I spread my mana wide and poked at the surroundings.

It was fortunate that I could at least feel things through mana.

I used the mana to check my body as well, and I realized that there were goosebumps on my arms and face.

It seemed my body was quite surprised.

I have a mountain of questions.

I have so many things I want to ask, but I am not sure if I will be able to talk properly in this place.

I am not even sure if the Master Monk will be able to understand me.

[It's all right. I can understand you.]

How?

[It's a part of the Power Skills that I received from a God.]

Power Skill?

[That's right. I am currently going through the trial to become a God's apostle, just like you.]

I was not surprised about the fact that the Master Monk knew I was going through the trial to become a God's apostle.

I was also speculating that he might have something similar to Power Skills.

He gives off a sensation similar to when I use the Power Skills.

Likewise, the space emanates the same feeling.

Could it be that apostles can recognize each other?

[To be precise, you are sensing the holy power. Because of the holy power, the priests can tell amongst themselves naturally that they are servants of a God. It is also a form of identification. Were you not aware of this? You are quite in the dark when it comes to the common knowledge.]

You are able to communicate meanings to me. Is that also by a Power Skill?

[No. That's a technique manifested through the mana. More importantly, have you calmed your agonizing thoughts?]

Agonizing thoughts? Are you aware of even my troubling

thoughts?

[I was watching everything since you entered this temple.]

How?

[Using the same method you are using to look at me.]

You are saying that you spread mana and watched me through the detection.

You are at the 33rd Room, yet you could see all the way to the very first room.

I get to witness such a ridiculous fiend.

I think I might die here.

[You have such rude thoughts.]

It's the fault of the one who looked into my mind.

My troubling thoughts were resolved to some extent.

The root of the problem was that I was unaware of the problems in the first place.

[The first step in resolving a problem is identifying the cause.]

[Well then, I'll tell you the details of the trial.]

[The final trial will begin.

Description: Be acknowledged by Armout, the temple's master and the one is blessed by the God. Prove that your proclamation is not just empty words.]

[Clear condition:

Endure both of Armout's trials and earn his recognition.]

Chapter 79 - Tutorial 13th Floor (7)

[The first trial is surviving this place for 24 hours.]

[The second trial is lasting 10 minutes in a duel with me.]

Look at this insane difficulty.

It is no joke starting, even with just the first one.

Although all my senses were paralyzed, I can at least maintain perception through the mana.

From that perspective, it's not that hard, but...

The mana is being spent too fast.

[That is also a special attribute of this space.]

I wonder how long I'll be able to hold out with my mana capacity?

Four hours? I think I might be able to hold out for a little over four hours.

After that, I will be trapped inside a world without any senses, a world where only my consciousness exists.

A world where I cannot see, hear or touch.

I'm certain even my sense of time will be anesthetized too.

Instead of it being a trial, it is closer to an ultra-high-tech single cell with the purpose of driving a man insane.

[However, there will be something you will gain from going through this process.]

First, let's try to conserve the mana as much as possible.

While I was at it, I suppressed the output of the mana so that I was using the bare minimum to just recognize a part of my body.

I have no reason to maintain detection of that monk.

Not only is it for certain that the monk won't attack me, the monk is overwhelmingly stronger than me.

The second trial will be another problem.

The Master Monk is too strong.

Way too strong.

It is not right to be so discouraged and falter even before challenging the monk. However, I can already see the end result clearly.

Beating the Master Monk and achieving victory is most certainly impossible.

I should just focus on surviving his onslaught for 10 minutes.

[Well then, would it be all right to start the first trial?]

About the first trial...

Can I get a reward for surviving longer than 24 hours?

[A reward? Tell me what it is that you want first. I'll think about it after hearing it.]

I'll endure it for 48 hours. In return, teach me the technique.

[What technique are you referring to?]

The technique you are using right now to talk to me.

The monk pondered deeply about it for a moment and said,

[Very well. If you endure this space for 48 hours, you have the qualification to learn it. You can always change the trial duration. Tell me at any time if you will be satisfied with enduring for 24 hours and giving up the reward instead. Well then, I'll start the trial.]

No. Wait.

Will it be all right if I started the trial after eating a medicine?

[Um. First, I'll have to ask what kind of medicine it is. You won't be able to consume the kind of potions that will directly affect the mana's recovery rate.]

No, this one is not like that.

It is the kind that prevents me from pooping.

[What kind of medicine did you say it was?]

It is a medicine that prevents me from pooping.

[...]

This was not some shabby medicine that induced constipation. That kind of medicine was considered as a poison, so it didn't even have any effect because of my Great Poison Resistance Skill.

This is a fantastic medicine that destroys the things inside my intestines.

I suppose it can be seen as a form of [enema](#), although this is different since the medicine destroys the things inside instead of getting things out of the inside.

[PR Note: An enema, for those that don't know, is the injection of a liquid into the rectum and colon by way of the anus. Basically shooting stuff up your butthole.]

[This is so unexpected.]

Hey, do you have any idea how important this is?

I need to hold out here for 48 hours, in this space where all senses are paralyzed.

In this place, I won't be able to feel if I need to poop or not for whooping 48 hours.

I swear that I am definitely not going to poop.

[It's all right if you eat this one. No, actually, I would like to recommend you to eat the medicine. Please take it.]

With the Master Monk's permission, I took out the medicine from the inventory.

After the painful experiences at the 12th Floor, I purchased the medicine after asking Kiri Kiri for advice.

These were expensive as well.

[Wait, there are two different medicines, is that all right?]

One of them was for preventing any involuntary leaking.

[... All right. Take them.]

[Now, then. Take a seat and begin.]

*

It was not so bad for the first few hours.

I could run the mana around and check my body. I calmly meditated and passed the time like that.

Throughout the first few hours, the one thing that I focused the most was the distribution of the mana.

To hold out as long as possible, I conserved as much mana as possible. I tried my best to use the mana efficiently.

However, soon, I ran out of mana.

To prepare myself for the duel that was to happen after the first trial, I decided not to use the little mana that was left.

From that moment, the trial really started.

With no sensory input left, only my consciousness existed in the world.

Although I actually lost my senses, it felt like I lost my body itself and was floating around in the universe alone.

The overwhelming emptiness gave me the chills.

From that terror, surprisingly, I felt exhilarating pleasure.

Am I insane?

As the Master Monk said, I think this experience will be valuable.

This experience will probably be once in a lifetime.

When the sense of touch was paralyzed at the 30th Room, I compared that to being deep underwater.

It was similar this time as well.

One thing that was a little different was that this was going beyond just feeling deeply submerged. I wondered if this was how I would have felt before I was born, when I was still a fetus.

If the state after dying is death, could I also call the state before being alive as death too?

One thing was for certain. What I was feeling right now was really making me think about death.

The only thing that was proof of existence was my consciousness, which was endlessly thinking.

Around that time, all of sudden, I felt that my consciousness was gradually slowing down.

It felt like I was sinking further down into the deep ocean.

My consciousness became calmer and heavier.

It felt soft.

It was like how it felt lying down on the bed after staying up whole night, the feeling at the moment before falling asleep.

[How is it?]

It feels like someone poured a bucket load of cold water when I was sleeping soundly.

I feel really awake.

To tell you honestly, I am displeased.

[It's usually like that, but this is also my role. I need to prevent the challenger from sinking to the bottom and to ensure their return during the trial. My role is to talk to the challenger like this.]

Are there cases where the challengers never come back?

[There were many. In proportion to the number of challengers who got this far, there are a lot of them. Those that got through the past rooms using cheats, seven times out of ten, are unable to come back.]

Can't you just drag the challenger out to the space outside of this room?

[That is not as easy as you think. It is hard for the consciousness to rise back up from being sunk. Also, if the challenger cannot rise back up without help, then someone else needs to drag the challenger up. However, usually, someone who is capable of such is...]

Usually?

[A God.]

Um...

So, do you need to talk to me for 48 hours?

[That's right. It won't be for exactly 48 more hours some time has passed since you have started. Ah, I cannot tell you about the passage of time.]

More importantly, do you have enough stuff to talk about for 48 hours?

[Of course. Do you have any idea how long I have done this for? If you want, I can tell you all sorts of stories for a whole week.]

So you were a chatterbox.

[Uuhurhurhur.]

I am sorry, but let's stop the conversation here.

I feel like I can sense something, so I want to focus on meditation.

[Oh. Interesting. It's all right. Continue focusing on meditation.]

You can just treat my voice as the sound of a distant wind.]

[What should I talk about first... Right, I'll tell you about the true nature of fighting art. I see that you have a very different opinion about this from us. Listen. I think that fighting art is...]

[You obtained Meditation.]

*

I am absolutely certain.

If someone dared me to bet my finger, I would. If someone dared me to bet money, I would.

I will have to think hard about it if someone dared me to bet the things between my legs though.

Anyway, I am certain that 48 hours have passed by already!

[It has not been 48 hours.]

Damn it.

I anticipated that my sense of time was going to be numbed too.

However, I did not think it would be to this degree.

How fast could a human consciousness be?

It was a question that I never thought about.

Also, what kind of change could that undergo in a special environment like this?

Actually, this place might have a special attribute that directly affects the speed of consciousness.

[Oh, you are very sharp. Ah, right. In our temple, do you know who has the sharpest deductive ability? It is ...]

In this place, there are two clues for me to gauge the passage of time.

There is my consciousness and the Master Monk's voice.

The problem was that his voice was not coming through his mouth.

He was merely placing meanings in mana and sending them to me through the Power Skill.

It is hard to determine the passage of time using the speed of his conversation.

Also, if my mental processes are accelerated, then how fast is it? If I am able to think about the story of the Lord of the Ring from the very beginning to the end in less than five seconds...

Or if it can do that even faster...

Uuuuuuaaaaaa. This is the worst.

How long has it been since the trial started?

It might only have been 47 hours and 59 minutes.

However, it is also possible that only about six hours passed.

[That's right. Of many answers, you are heading toward one. Think about that topic some more.]

This trial, which paralyzed all senses, also blinded me from my sense of time. Perhaps, for the 48 hours, I might get to indirectly experience an endless passage of time.

Passage of infinite time...

It was not surprising that I thought about this.

That was the principle of the God of Slowness.

The traveler and leader who follows the infinite passage of time.

As I thought about the God of Slowness, I also thought about the God of Adventure.

At a glance, they appeared to be similar.

The two Gods were contradicting in two characteristics.

The process and the result.

The God of Slowness wanted the process of someone who does not falter or run into walls.

In contrast, the God of Adventure wanted the process of someone who overcomes things while agonizing and failing and marching forward.

As for the result, the God of Slowness wants a process that repeats endlessly.

The God of Adventure wants a definite triumph through the process.

Now that I organized my thoughts, the God of Slowness' philosophy is...

In many ways, it is similar to the values that these monks who warship God of Duel.

To point out one thing that's different, the opponent must exist due to the arrangement of a duel, and the monks have huge respect toward opponent.

However, the monks focus more on performing their arts to perfection rather than interacting with the opponent through the art. Considering this, as I thought, these monks have principles similar to the God of Slowness.

[Hur. That's surprising. The God of Duel said you have found the right answer. This is something I didn't know about. God of Slowness... Actually, I've never heard of that God.]

Unfortunately, my thoughts about the God of Adventure and God of Slowness ended there.

I didn't have any more clues to sustain my train of thought.

I stopped the deduction and started examining myself.

I went back to dig around my own past.

From the oldest memories I had from childhood and the recent memories...

I thought about them, and thought about them some more.

Funny thing was, that I was able to recall memories that I didn't reflect about about on the past tries.

The memories that I recalled already before were also be recalled from a new perspective.

By the time I ran through my memories several dozens of times, and by the time I have done it over a hundred times, I could watch my memories, even my happiness and sadness, from a third person perspective in addition to my own.

[You obtained Meditation]

[You obtained Mana Circuit]

*

I completely depleted all of my mana.

It was totally exhausted.

I even spent the extremely small amount that I had been saving like pocket change.

Damn it all. How am I supposed to fight the Master Monk in this state?

He won't even let me drink a mana potion.

With the final line of defense gone now, the terror and anxiety sipped into my mind again.

I started to wonder the well-being of my body, which had all of the senses cut off.

Am I still sitting well?

Am I standing?

Am I lying down?

Where is the Master Monk?

I cannot be certain if he is still at the center of the room.

Maybe he is right in front of my nose and looking into me...

As I felt the terror, I realized something that had slipped my

mind.

I could no longer hear the Master Monk's voice.

Chapter 80 - Tutorial 13th Floor (8)

My sense of anxiety surged.

The Master Monk's voice could no longer be heard, suggesting numerous possible dangers.

It could be that my consciousness had fallen too deep as the Master Monk warned of.

Or, it could be that he simply stopped talking.

Regardless, this is extremely dangerous.

No, the latter is significantly more dangerous.

The predicament I am in implied that I could die instantly if the monk wished.

Fortunately, although time continued to pass, my body... no, my consciousness still felt fine.

I became certain that I cannot hear him because my consciousness had sunk too deep.

Since then, I focused on just the flow of my consciousness.

Just like before the Master Monk talked to me and woke up my mind, I had to endure a sleepy sensation.

Assuming that the situation right now was similar, I should greatly accelerate my consciousness and wake up from sleep.

I should focus as much as I can and keep my mind active by thinking.

Think about things endlessly and beyond.

I am not sure if this is the right method.

Honestly, I am not certain about my theory on my condition either.

I'm still trying despite this. Well, it is not like I have other options.

*

I thought about a science fiction movie about space I watched once.

In one scene, the tether that connected an astronaut to the spaceship was cut by an accident. The astronaut was lost to the space and became a mummy.

I wonder if my current predicament similar to that of the astronaut from the movie.

I do have one thing that's better: knowing that this hardship will end eventually.

Damn it.

The world of no senses soon became the world of infinity.

In a world where nothing existed, only my consciousness remained.

I need something.

I need something that can support my mind.

I focused my mind on my body which I could not feel.

Alone, I visualized the outline of my body, which could not be seen or felt.

The world of no senses was like an infinitely wide dark canvas. On this canvas, I drew my own existence.

Actually, it was close to just an imaginary drawing.

I had no sensory input. How could I know where my hands were, where my legs were, and what was the look on my face was?

On top of this, the drawing changed continuously.

Sometimes, it looked like my body was lying down. There were times when I was sitting.

As I thought, this was a meaningless effort.

What could be more meaningless than struggling to feel something that cannot be felt?

However, I cannot afford to quit.

I wanted to know my body's current condition. Not knowing was driving me insane.

Even if it was just a little bit, I wanted to feel the sensory inputs from the body.

The obsession was cornered by my anxiety, and it focused on the imaginary drawing of my body, which was like a mirage that didn't exist at all.

*

I continued my thoughts on the condition of my body.

I wonder how long I had been at this?

The imaginary drawing of body, which had been fluidly changing continuously before, had a stabilized visual.

Honestly, this was no different from a virtual character.

Like an account's character in an internet's mini-homepage, it was representing a virtual version of me.

My body was currently lying flat on the floor.

It was a little undignifying that I was drooling a little, but it didn't look like my body had any big problems.

My hands were on top of the stomach. My legs were stretched out and spread.

Although it is an imaginary construct created by the power of my imagination... It looks too real.

Is this really an illusion? Is it possible that it is not? In the state of having no sensory input, I may have managed to detect my body through a very long time using super human focus. Is it really nothing more than just an illusion that I dreamed up? No, if that's the case, instead of this illusion, what is body? What now? What

kind of insane question is that? My body is the body that I have. It's just that I cannot feel it at the moment. No, no. That's not what I am saying...

Numerous random questions sprouted up, answered by an equally plentiful quantity of answers.

Before long, my mind had divided into two, and then they divided further to repeat questions and answers.

Like that, time passed, passed and passed some more.

[You acquired Mental Corruption Immunity.]

*

[That's why I'm saying this. The breakfast menu in our temple to be improved.]

All of sudden, I could hear the monk's voice.

After that, that was the end of the voice.

I could not hear the rest.

What is this?

*

All of sudden, my body started to move.

I am not talking about the real body that I cannot feel. I am talking about the illusion that I drew to help me calm my anxiety.

I had concluded that the illusion body was just an illusion.

This is just a fake imagery that I dreamed up. At least that was what I thought that.

The virtual body that I made with my mind is moving.

It is trying to raise its hands, touch my face and massage the arms and legs.

It's moving well.

Also, I can feel them.

This is insane.

This is imaginary visual, hearing and touch.

To think that I could cause such realistic sensations using my imagination alone...

I am not just a little crazy.

I named the illusion body, the one I made based on my imagination, the body of consciousness.

I had the body of consciousness to sit in meditative pose and started to meditate once again.

Although this was not a real body but a fake one made of my futile imaginations, my mind felt at ease.

It felt like I acquired a floating wooden plank after being thrown into to middle of the ocean.

Anyway, I could rely on it.

[You acquired Meditation.]

*

[Personally, I like chicken dishes. I don't think it is right to insist on vegetarian dishes just because I'm a monk.]

Again, I could hear the Monk's voice.

I finally realized it.

The flow of time was running amok.

It was not that the monk stopped talking. It was not that my consciousness had sunk to the bottom either.

It was just that the time was flowing slowly. It was flowing extremely slowly.

In other words, my consciousness had far beyond a normal human's capacities.

Because of this, while I had the time to finish several hours or days' worth of thoughts, only a moment had passed.

As I thought, before I could hear the monk's next words, several days' worth of time had passed in my consciousness' accelerated time frame.

[I think the chicken drumsticks are the best. What's your preference?]

Damn it.

To withstand 48 hours, the condition of the trial, just how long am I supposed to be trapped in this prison of consciousness?

*

In the end, I overcame it!

I am not saying it had been 48 hours and the trial was over.

I meant I succeeded in withstanding the infinite emptiness and anxiousness in this irrational space.

I just understood it all as pain.

I am currently working on raising my resistances.

I am enduring pain.

As I thought of that, my heart felt a bit more lively.

Uuhahaha.

Fuck. At the moment, I am working.

In this world, where just my consciousness and the imaginary

body created by the consciousness remained, I continued to examine myself.

*

[Look at this. This inflexible chef brought me potatoes again. Still, it looks delicious. I am sorry, but since you are not in condition to eat, I'll eat by myself.]

This is the second meal for the Master Monk.

How many times does he eat per day?

I wish these monks only ate once a day.

If that was the case, it means two days already had gone by.

However, if they do eat three meals a day... It means that not even a day had gone by.

I desperately hoped that the Master Monk was the kind who didn't eat much.

*

This is strange.

I cannot collect mana.

I knew I had spent all of my mana earlier, but I was supposed to regenerate mana over time.

Where did it go?

Could it be that only a brief moment had passed since the trial started and it has not been long enough

to recover even a small handful of mana?

That could not be.

Even with my sense of time completely broken... Fuck. It felt several months had gone by. Toughing it

out like this for several months is too much.

[Once I get used to the potatoes, I can taste its sweetness, so it is delicious.]

As for you, will you just shut the hell up?!

*

Now, I have the perfect grasp of the body of consciousness.

I am able to visualize my limbs, feet, hands and even fine details of the face.

Could this really be nothing but an illusion that I made with my mind?

I cannot believe this.

If this is the case, then what about my real body?

What's the difference?

This body of consciousness has everything that it should have.

I can touch and feel with it.

I focused the mana circuit on the body of consciousness

Mana didn't exist in the body of consciousness either.

Still, I tried.

Following the circuit's flow path, I continued to examine the body.

I already had done plenty of examination on my organs.

I had done so much of the reflections on my past memories that I was sick of contemplating it.

I emptied my mind and moved my consciousness to circulate through the mana circuit's path.

[You obtained Mana Circuit.]

I found mana.

It was purely by chance.

It was not hidden somewhere.

It was a part of the mana that got regenerated over time, which was what I had thought about before.

Surprisingly, before I realized, the mana was being used to maintain the body of consciousness.

Fortunately, there was some mana left, although it was just a teeny amount.

I wanted to use the remaining mana and check my body.

If possible, I wanted to check the situation inside the room and the Master Monk.

However, I could not afford to waste the mana like that.

I circulated the mana through the mana circuit.

It should not have been possible to recognize the mana circuit's flow path at the moment because all senses were paralyzed.

Also, the mana could run amok if something went wrong in mana circuit's path, so recklessly circulating mana inside the body is a very dangerous thing to do.

The body of consciousness helped.

It was a creation of my mind based on my real body, which I could not feel at the moment.

The body of consciousness even included fine details of the mana circuit's flow paths. Using the body of consciousness, I circulated mana.

If I didn't make the body of consciousness, running the mana inside the body would have been impossible.

This was also the reason why I simply choose to conserve mana instead of circulating the remaining mana and growing it ever since the trial begun.

I stayed calm and ran the mana.

Little by little...

I did it carefully so that even the smallest amount of mana would not be lost.

I paid extreme attention to details.

I stepped on the desire to check my body and the surroundings. Instead, I focused on growing mana.

[They brought yams instead of potatoes. I like potatoes better than yams.]

*

Finally, I collected enough mana.

Finally, finally!

Before I spread the mana, I moved the body of consciousness and

sat down in meditation pose.

I had to focus.

Mana was quickly depleted in this space.

It won't take long before the mana I collected so far would disappear completely.

In that short amount of time, I need to collect as much information as I can.

I hardened my resolve and spread mana.

The first thing detected by the mana was my body.

My body was sitting in meditative pose.

My real body was sitting just like how my body of consciousness was. I was shocked.

I was actually doing that as well?

Could it be that my body of consciousness is not an illusion?

Inside the world of no sensory input, I continued to make guesses and imagined to draw the outline of my body.

I believed that the body I drew this way was an illusion, so I named it my body of consciousness.

However, it was not an illusion.

What I drew was the right answer.

Inside the world where I could not feel anything, I accurately drew and recognized my real body.

Instead of calming down and organizing my thoughts, I spread the mana further.

I must set aside such thoughts for later.

At the moment, I need to focus on the mana that I already sent outside of my body. I need to detect as many things I can.

I detected the Master Monk sitting at the center of the room.

Fortunately, he was sitting motionless there.

Mana had spread further.

It got to the 33rd Room's entrance and exit. It also went beyond.

It even got to the 32nd Room.

It detected the monk who was lying down on the 32nd Room's center.

It detected 31st and 30th Rooms.

It even detected 25th Room's monk.

Like that, the mana spread and spread. In the end, it even got to the First Room, the very beginning of the room.

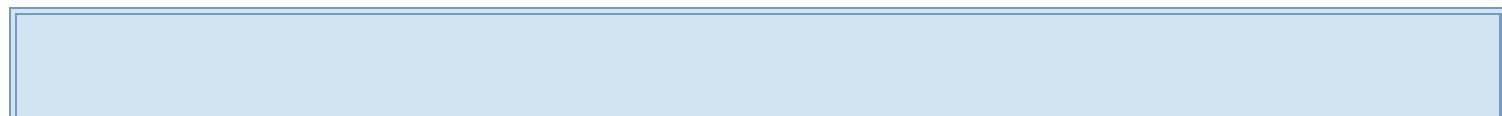
I panicked.

It should not be possible for me to have such a long detection range with the mana I have and the mana operation skill I currently possess.

It was absolutely impossible.

The Master Monk said he had been watching me since the very first room using mana.

Perhaps this phenomenon has something to do with the Master Monk's ability.



[You acquired Energy Sensory.]

[You acquired Holy Power Resistance.]

[God of Slowness is satisfied.]

[God of Duel is complaining.]

[You are almost there, Challenger. Hold out just a little longer.]

*

[You acquired Mental Corruption Immunity Lv.3]

[You acquired Meditation Lv. 11]

[You acquired Mana Circuit Lv. 15]

[You acquired Energy Sensory Lv.1]

[You acquired Holy Power Resistance Lv.1]

After sensing the entire temple by spreading the mana once, my

sense of time had recovered a little.

To describe how much, I could hear the monk's voice once every one minute.

[You have worked hard, Challenger. Your first trial is now over.]

Is it really over?

[That's right. Is it hard for you to believe?]

It is hard for me to believe. It feels unreal.

I had a reason to feel this way. I still could not see, hear or feel anything.

Still, a few things are different now.

[With the first trial over, a few of the effects of this room had disappeared.]

For example, accelerated mind, increased focus, paralysis in sense of time...

Those kind of things?

[That's right. You know well.]

The trial is already enough to drive one to insanity without those. Were they really necessary?

As someone who just finished the first trial, I really felt that the amplification on the mind and focus were like calamities.

My thoughts were over-accelerated. The flow of time could not catch up to the speed of my thoughts.

In the end, I was trapped inside my mind.

Honestly, it was scary.

I was scared that I may never escape the prison of thoughts forever.

[Actually, in your case, the extents of those effects were particularly severe. I don't think God of Duel arranged them that way for you in particular, but... Hm... Still, thanks to them, you have obtained things, haven't you?]

Certainly, I had gained things.

Still, I never want to experience this again.

There probably were more people who died from going insane than gaining things from the experience.

[Uuhurhurhur. That's actually true.]

How could you laugh about that...

[Challenger, I strongly recommend that you challenge the second trial right away. There isn't much time.]

There isn't much time? What do you mean?

[You probably cannot feel it, but your body is dying from the strains of excessive thought processing and focus.]

Chapter 81 - Tutorial 13th Floor (9)

It felt as if I was diagnosed with final stage cancer from a rudimentary health examination in school.

That's so out of the blue. Why?

I am dying?

[That's right. Amplified by the effects of this space, it seemed you focused your consciousness to the extreme. Your body... Your brain to be precise, was not able to endure it.]

How is my exact condition?

[You are gushing blood from your eyes, nose, mouth, and ears.]

... What about other openings?

[Fortunately, they are still safe and sound.]

So, I'm not shitting blood out of my butt yet.

I wonder how long I can endure this?

[About 20 minutes. Instead of straining yourself, leaving the room is an option. You have more than demonstrated your

qualification through the first trial. If you go outside and drink a potion to recuperate, you will recover to your previous state.]

However, if I do, this last room...

[Of course, you will fail the second trial.]

In that case, the answer was already decided.

Let's start quickly.

[Count to six in your mind. I'll start afterwards.]

One.

I need to roll my brain.

I don't have time.

I still cannot feel anything.

In this world of no sensory inputs, could I even survive 10 minutes?

I cannot even see the monk's attacks. There is also no guarantee that I would be able to move my body at will either.

I did reserve a bit of mana.

However, it is not even close to being enough.

I don't have time to cultivate the mana through the mana circuit either.

Even if I did, the mana I have at the moment is too little to maintain mana growth.

Two.

I have enough to take a quick look of my body. That's all.

I can't afford to sit here and hope for and be disappointed about mana that I don't have.

The key thing at the moment is thinking about how to use this extremely small amount of mana efficiently.

Using it at a critical moment by reading the flow of the battle will be impossible.

If I am to survive 10 minutes with a single move, then there is only one method.

I need to subdue the Master Monk with that single move.

That's impossible.

Three.

The difference in combat strength is clear.

I recognized this as soon as I entered the 33rd Room.

Since the moment I met him, the Master Monk had been regularly exuding his power.

Because of this, I was certain about this fact.

That monk was unbelievably powerful. It was hard for me to believe he appeared at 13th Floor , even if it was the Hell Difficulty.

Compared to other enemies I defeated easily so far, this monk was most certainly an outlier.

Neutralizing him instantly was impossible.

Therefore, I have to dodge and withstand hits.

My body is dying already, but I am confident about my cockroach-like survivability.

The key is how to endure this.

Four.

I remembered about an experience I had in middle of the first trial.

I had sensed the entire 13th Floor's Stage by spreading a small amount of mana.

If I could use abilities similar to that time...

If I focus on just the monk instead of the entire Stage...

It is possible. That should be more than enough to survive this.

How?

Let's think about the conditions during that time.

Because of the trial's effects, my mind and focus were amplified in addition to an alarming sense of desperation.

Desperation, huh...

When I spread mana, I could not help but feel more desperate.

I felt like I was on the bottom of an infinite pitfall. In despair, I wanted to confirm the world.

I wanted to feel my existence again.

The second condition...

Although the effects of the trial are gone, let's try to recreate the conditions artificially.

Five.

[Battle Focus]

My mind was accelerated through the Battle Focus.

As I thought, what I experienced was a decelerated world caused by an acceleration of processing speed.

It was like the world caused by the Battle Focus.

Of course, there is a difference.

The degree of deceleration is different.

I need to increase the focus.

I need to focus more, even more.

Battle Focus was originally a passive skill.

When I was in a near-death situation, I was able to achieve extraordinary level of focus, and the skill obtained active choice option. That was all.

I need to focus even more.

The memories of from the first trial in the world of no sensory inputs was helping.

I tried to recreate the sensation from that time.

The Master Monk said my body was dying from excessive thought processing and focus.

In that case, what I'm doing right now, trying to bring my focus to even greater extreme, is no different from suicide.

My brain is already at its limit, and I'm putting it through great strain again.

Still, I chose this path without hesitation. I had a reason for this.

[Perseverance]

The Power Skill from the God of Adventure which increases my combat abilities proportionally to my condition and the power of the opponent...

I already confirmed that the ability to focus is included in one of the increased abilities by the Perseverance.

My body's toughness also increased with the skill.

I can survive this.

I cannot be certain about this, but I have to withstand this.

Six.

[Soul Steal]

I used the little bit of mana that was left in me.

I couldn't afford to focus mana in my eyes and ears.

That would have required too much mana.

Also, because I had not used my eyes and ears for so long, I probably won't be able to follow the Master Monk's moves anyway.

I shouldn't spread mana either.

Instead, I sent a part of the mana to my brain.

I accelerated my mind even further.

Afterwards, I kept the rest of the mana.

Like that, I patiently waited.

My focus was throttled to the maximum.

Instead of being anxious, I maintained my focus and waited.

Slowly, very slowly, something was approaching me.

It was will.

A will that wanted to attack me.

To be precise, it was mana that contained will.

I felt it.

My gambling paid off.

The mana inside my body roughly detected the situation outside.

If not for Energy Sensory Skill that I just obtained this time and if I could not maintain a high-level focus, then I would not have detected the attack and be hit by it directly.

Like how the sun that rose from the east disappeared to the west over the course of the day, the invisible attack approached me slowly.

Over a long time, I observed it, and soon, I was able to tell what it was.

It was the knuckles of the Master Monk.

He was using his right fist and targeting my heart.

The monks I met at the 13th Floor all used same fighting arts and had the same anatomy.

Thanks to that, I could be certain where the monk was targeting exactly.

I moved my body and blocked the attack.

I was not certain if I did.

My body, which I cannot feel, moved like I wanted?

Did it block the monk's attack?

I cannot be certain.

Perhaps I blocked it perfectly like a painting. It was also possible I was rolling on the floor after getting hit.

It could be that my body was almost dying.

However, I didn't use mana to check my body's condition.

I just believed that my body blocked the attack successfully and prepared for my next movement.

*

I stopped the fifth attack.

Perhaps, about one or two minutes might have passed.

One thing remarkable was that I was blocking them well somehow.

Just before being hit by the Master Monk's attack, I had been successfully recognizing the attack's trajectory. However, I still could not feel my body, and I was not certain if I was moving either.

The Master Monk is weaker than I thought.

No, he is not overwhelmingly strong as I worried.

I could relax a little bit now.

As I waited for the next attack, I now had the moment to spare and think about things other than defense.

Before I block the attack, what I detect and feel is the will.

The mana inside the monk's attack.

Also, the will contained in the mana.

I could feel them.

Perhaps that will could be the clue?

I thought about the conditions of the first trial again.

Extreme focus and desperation.

I am already bringing out extreme focus at the cost of my life span in real time.

In that case, what about desperation?

I'm more desperate than ever or anyone at the moment.

I'm blind, deaf and I'm relying on uncertain sensations from my body... no, using just the Energy Sensory, I was blocking the attacks and enduring the assault.

What's the difference?

It's the mana.

There is will contained in the Master Monk's mana.

The will and mana must not exist separately.

Just like how I spread mana after putting in a sense of desperation, I need to do the same and put will into mana.

I brought back the sensation and memories from that moment.

In a way that feels the same as that time, spread the mana by...

It was at that moment.

I opened my eyes to new things.

[You acquired Energy Sensory Lv.6]

[You acquired Strengthening Lv.1]

[You acquired Amplification Lv.1]

Immediately, I could see the layout of the 33rd Room and Master Monk.

I was still blind, but I could see them through the Energy Sensory.

The monk was slowly positioning to perform his next attack.

Because of the effect of the extremely focused mind, the monk was moving slower than a sloth.

Also, as if he was thinking I would never attack, he had rather defenseless pose.

The best medicine for letting guards down is a beating.

[Talaria's Wings]

[Iron Wall]

[Blink]

It's my certain kill body smash move!

Die, Master Monk!

*

[Die, Master Monk! How could you say that? Wasn't that too much?]

I'm sorry... My apologies.

The monk said in calm voice.

[Well, I really almost died. Right. My organs were damaged quite a bit too... My shoulder bones have been cracked as well. This is the end of your trial. The time is up. It is fortunate.]

After his words, I felt like I could hear him saying I would have died if this continued.

I was excited at the moment and threw the Blink-Body Smash move. However, in the end, it was a bad move.

The monk was attacked as he was off guard, allowing me to damage him. However, the damage I sustained was also as great.

I used Iron Wall and Talaria's Wings to protect my body as much as I could. However, I came to realize that my body was already in shambles.

It is true that the monk was seriously wounded and that made surviving for ten minutes a lot easier, but...

If I didn't have the Perseverance Skill, I would not have been able to withstand the impact from my own attack and died instead.

I should reflect on this.

Let's not get excited. Let's not get excited. Let's not get excited.

Now, reflection complete.

[Congratulations. You are the first one ever to clear the 13th

Floor perfectly.]

[Receive your rewards.]

[You cleared the 13th Floor of Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your wounds will be healed.]

[You obtained 3000 points as rewards.]

[You obtained 3000 points for the best clear.]

[Many Gods are showing positive responses to you. You obtained 8500 points.]

[Many Gods are showing negative responses to you. You lost 700 points.]

[Additional rewards will be given based on your play record.]

[Instead of an additional reward, the God of Adventure would like to gift you with a part of his power. Would you like to accept it?]

Immediately after clearing the stage, when my stamina and mana were recovered, I spread the mana into the surroundings.

Ugh, I finally feel like living.

I spread mana at will and checked the surrounding and my body.

... My face is full of blood.

The blood on my face is still there even after I recovered.

I'll wipe it off later.

Things were a little different from earlier, when I had the Energy Sensory open.

As I thought, it is not something I can use any time.

Two conditions, the focus and will, needs to be met.

Now that I know how to use it, let's diligently practice this from now on.

Moreover, Um...

There is a new kind of message that I had never seen before.

It's saying I should get a reward for clearing the Stage perfectly.

That's new. I had never seen this kind of message before.

It appeared to be the special message that appears when the challenger clears the extraordinary challenge that's beyond the clear condition of the stage.

This is different from the conquest clear that falls in the category of design flaw. I think I can treat this as the real ending for the stage.

Also... the God of Adventure wants to gift me an additional reward?

Hasn't God of Adventure gifted me a Power Skill to me already?

I'll accept for now.

[You acquired Talaria's Wings Lv. Max]

What is this?

[Talaria's Wings (Lv. Max)]

Description: The original skill was put together in haste by the God of Adventure due to time constraint. The God of Adventure reassembled the parts and recreated the skill.

The weaknesses were addressed and new functions were added.

While recreating the skill, the God of Adventure, the creator of the skill, earned the title ‘fool.’

What was that just now?

He gifted me the Talaria’s Wings again?

I think I should ask Kiri Kiri for a more detailed explanations.

Well then, now...

Master Monk, isn’t there something you are supposed to give me?

[Of course. First, as the reward promised for enduring the first trial...]

About containing will in the mana and delivering it to another, right?

[That’s right.]

I guess it will be hard for me to use this right now.

[First. I'll explain how. It seems you figured out what the technique was on your own.]

For about ten minutes, I earnestly learned the method from the Master Monk.

As I thought, this is a difficult technique.

I think it will take a while before I can actually use it.

[Next, it is the reward for having cleared all of the trials in the 33rd Room. It is a Holy Medicine. It will permanently fortify your body and increase your capacity for mana. If you promise to give me something in return, I can give you a Holy Medicine that's a little better than this.]

Something in return?

What is it? Tell me.

[It's about the medicines you took before you started the trials.]

Ah, the medicines that constipates?

[Can you give me a little bit of those? In exchange, I'll give you

superior Holy Medicines.]

I had total of six medicines left.

The constipation medicines were not as precious as the Holy Medicine the Master Monk was offering, which could not be purchased anywhere, even in the store, so I gave him the medicines without hesitation.

[I guess I'll be all right for the next six years.]

What do you mean by that?

[Every year, there is an event where a selected monk challenges the first trial in this room which you had just completed.]

I guess that means the selected monk had been pooping inside the room every year.

[... That's right.]

I wish I bought more of the medicines.

Kuhum.

The Master Monk dry coughed and was about to hand me the Holy Medicine. However, he suddenly stopped his hand.

What is this? You didn't just change your mind, did you?

[Um... This is a first. The God of Duel told me to give you the highest quality of Holy Medicine.]

The God of Duel did?

Honestly, we don't get along.

The monk handed me the Holy Medicine. I put it away in the inventory for now and thought about this.

Could I see this as an olive branch gesture?

[God of Slowness is satisfied.]

[God of Adventure is laughing at someone.]

[God of Duel is infuriated at someone who is belittling the god.]

Chapter 82 - Tutorial 13th Floor (10)

[Well then, farewell.]

The Master Monk calmly said his farewell. I did the same, opened the 33rd Room's door and proceeded to leave the room.

There was a portal on the corridor's floor.

Apparently, I'm supposed to go this way.

I got on the portal and teleported into Kiri Kiri's green field.

“Helloooo! Are you still angry? You are going to buy me a cake this time, right?”

As always, Kiri Kiri was asking me about cake. I looked at her.

It was obvious that I was glad and happy to see her.

However, I was not feeling all that great at the moment.

“Kiri Kiri, wait a minute.”

I feel uncomfortable.

Actually, I'm surprised that I feel this way.

I can see the beautiful field and sky. There is the sound of wind whistling past my ears. I can feel the gentle breeze on my skin.

However, I found them all uncomfortable.

The senses that I regained after I left the 13th Room could not feel more uncomfortable.

Is it because of the memories of when I had all of my senses paralyzed and watched the world by relying solely on mana... or when was trapped in the world of no sensory input without any mana at all?

With my senses revived after such a long time, I don't feel comfortable.

I thought I would feel refreshed when I got to this field.

I thought I would feel liberated and accomplished.

However, instead, to think I would feel uncomfortable like this...

I sat down, closed my eyes and circulated mana.

Sitting down, I checked the body's condition and spread mana to

the area to check the surrounding.

Soon, I came to realize what it was that was bothering me.

Now, using mana to observe the world was easier than interacting with it through my senses.

Using mana was far more effective.

I could access more information with greater accuracy with even greater ease than before.

I learned why Lee Sin, a fictional warrior character, always had a blindfold on.

Other than the drawback of having had to spend mana constantly, the mana-consuming Energy Sensory skill's performance far exceeding that of normal senses.

However, I cannot afford to close my eyes for the rest of my life and rely only on mana.

There is happiness in life that can only be achieved through seeing beautiful things with eyes, smelling aromas, eating delicious food, listening to upbeat songs, and touching things.

I opened my eyes and focused on the sensations I could feel through my senses.

I can see Kiri Kiri's face. She is right in front of me. She is looking at me worriedly.

I can feel emotions that differ from my observations through mana.

There are things that I can observe only after I see for myself with my own eyes.

The world that I'm observing through my senses and mana is the same.

There is no need for me to give up one side for the other

It is just that I had spent a long time relying only on my Energy Sensory when my other senses were all paralyzed. I felt awkward for a moment because of the experience.

The 13th floor was the best environment for cultivating one's mana operation ability and Energy Sensory. This is just a minor side effect from being in such a great environment for so long.

There is nothing wrong with observing an object through multiple lens.

I can see the cake with my eyes, smell it with my nose, and taste it with my mouth.

I can even touch the cake by dabbing the cream with my finger.

Like this, I just need to feel the Energy Sensory through mana like the rest of my other senses.

It just feels weird just because I'm not used to it yet.

I used mana to sense the flower near me.

I could feel the backside of the flower and its microscopic texture with greater detail than I would normally see.

I looked at the flower with my eyes.

It was not anything flashy. However, it was one of the common flowers on the field that soothed my mind.

I touched the flower with my hand.

I tried shaking the stem of the flower, which was thin and delicate. It looked like it could be easily plucked.

I bent down and tried smelling it.

I couldn't really smell the flower. Instead, I just got to smell the grass.

All of these were same.

Like that, I slowly attempted to be more familiar with the skill.

[Energy Sensory Strengthening Lv.1 was combined with Sensory Strengthening Lv. 12]

[You obtained Sensory Strengthening Lv. 14]

[Energy Sensory Widening Lv.1 was combined with Sensory Widening Lv.5]

[You obtained Sensory Widening Lv.8]

*

“Is it over?”

I was lying on the field. Kiri Kiri walked over to me.

Um.

Her one-piece skirt is waving in the air. I can almost see what's underneath.

Instead of trying to shift my eyes around, I just used mana.

It's light blue.

“Kiaaaaaaooooong!”

Kiri Kiri screamed in her unique little pitch and threw a punch at my stomach.

Of course, the punch lacked any meaningful power.

“How rude!”

“I'm sorry. I suddenly wanted to check.”

I think I should be careful when I observe another being using mana like this.

It won't matter if the observed being cannot feel my mana movement, but if the being can sense it, I might get a strongly negative response.

Actually, that was rude as well. It would even be the justify attacking me.

“How do you feel?”

The question is quite out of the blue.

“It’s great. I feel like flying. I feel like I’m looking at the world through different kind of eyes. It’s fun just to lie on the field and just observe the breeze the shaking grass.”

“Heheng.”

What is she smiling about?

“How was it?”

That question is even more ludicrous than the first question.

Why are your questions all lacking in common sense?

However, I could understand her question.

After all, she could read my mood and thoughts.

She must be asking about what I was thinking.

I was thinking about the things I went through recently.

“It was great.”

“How?”

Being with Idy at the 12th Floor by summoning her became a very valuable experience.

I believed that I was all alone in the Tutorial. However, Idy became family.

I came to learn the joy in spending simple days with the warmth of a family member with me. I learned how thankful I should be to have someone with me.

In addition, I came to recognize the importance and joy of good meals.

When she disappeared, my loneliness was more apparent than ever.

It became my new weakness. However, I don't think it is a bad thing.

I am a human being.

Being lonely and sad were natural.

I came to realize that as I chatted with the monks.

I could be like that.

The monks taught me that they were not just some monsters that I need to beat the crap out of and kill for experience points but beings who I could have mutual respect with.

We exchanged ideas although we had opposing opinions. We had whole-hearted duels and even discussed them afterwards. There were joys in them all.

They made me throw away the friend-or-foe mentality that I had about all beings in this world.

Relationships were complicated, and they could change.

Again, I gave them a chance to think.

I have lived my entire life by relying on my normal senses. The space where all of my senses were paralyzed showed me a new world.

I came to know the new world that could be experienced through the Energy Sensory.

I had the time to think about myself while I was trapped in the accelerated mind.

I reminisced about my past actions and emotions, and realized that things from the past still had huge influence in my current self.

The past was definitely important. However, I shouldn't be trapped by my past.

I became fully aware of this fact.

I need to live in the present, not the future.

Many things have happened.

I experienced many things. I felt and realized many things from my experiences.

New problems came up, but I could also find as many new answers throughout the period.

I am definitely growing, both in the inside and outside.

I am moving forward.

“I'm glad.”

Kiri Kiri smiled widely and asked again,

“So, how do you feel?”

“As I said earlier, I’m feeling great.”

“Tell me in detail.”

Um... How should I say this?

How I am feeling right now...

“I feel happy.”

Happy.

That was the word that best described how I was feeling.

“Also... I feel like I’m alive.”

“Hoooouuuujae was alive before too.”

I was not certain.

I thought all of this could be just a dream.

I didn’t just question the reality of the Tutorial once in a while.

I always pondered that.

I believed that I already died in my one room from alcohol addiction and all of this is just a hopeless dream of a dying man.

So, I never tried hard to uncover the world of Tutorial in detail.

I never thought about why something like Tutorial was possible. I didn't bother wondering how it worked either.

I intentionally narrowed my field of vision.

I just focused and obsessed over the goals I set.

Getting stronger, growing, and winning.

However, I'm different now.

Even if this is all just a dream, an illusion.

Anyhow, at the moment, I am happy.

If this is not my life, then what is it?

I am alive in this place.

It could be that I'm excited just because of my temporary sense of accomplishment and the special characteristics of the green field. Still...

Regardless, that's how I am feeling.

"I'm so glad, hehe."

[God of Adventure is very happy.]

Looking at Kiri Kiri's bright smile, I opened the store and purchased a cake.

Kiri Kiri's smile became even brighter.

*

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Are you done with preparations?]

When I was watching Kiri Kiri hurriedly making the cake disappear, a message from Kim Min-hyuk came.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: What preparation?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor ... Preparation for the competition. You rascal. Don't you remember that it will start soon?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: The competition is going to start? Now?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: No, not right now. It will start at Round 16, Day 0, 00:00. Did you not see the notice? I even send you a message.]

I was in a situation where I could not see it...

I asked Kim Min-hyuk for more information as I looked at the community forums.

The community was in a mode of festivities.

Everyone is all excited.

There really was a notice about the competition commencing on Round 16, Day 0, 00:00.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: By the way, does it matter that I don't have anything in particular that I should prepare?]

I just need to show up and participate. That would be all.

Even if I don't prepare anything special, it was going to end in my

victory.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: No! That... Ugh. I asked you to take command of the people in the Normal Difficulty. Remember?]

Ah...

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: Hey, can I just not do that?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: No, you cannot just forget about it.]

You heartless rascal.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Anyway, prepare to take command of the people. There isn't much information about how the competition will be held, so the decisions made by the commanders of each difficulty will become important.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: If the people get separated based on the difficulties, then it will be hard for me to watch the members of the Normal Difficulty.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: If that happens, all members of the Order of Vigilance in the Normal Difficulty will go there, so it will be fine regardless.]

That's true. Kim Min-hyuk is asking me to take command of the people in the Normal Difficulty mostly because the rankers in the

Normal Difficulty, including Kim Min-hyuk, are mostly spread apart thin due to wide authority of the Order.

If it happens to turn out that people have to gather together based on difficulties, then I won't have to worry about the gap in the Normal Difficulty's forces.

I sent a message to Kim Min-hyuk, telling him I understood what he was saying, and then closed the community and the message window.

“Are you going to go now?”

Kiri Kiri's nose was submerged deep in the cake dish. She momentarily raised her head to ask me.

Before I answered, I checked the time first.

[Round 15, Day 29, 21:20]

I am not sure what to do.

“I'll stay a little while longer and then go.”

After she finishes eating the cake, I think I'll just take a nap here.

“Hey, Kiri Kiri, I have a question.”

“Ung. What is it?”

“I obtained Holy Power Resistance Skill this time. Is this going to negatively affect the Power Skills that I have?”

“Of course not. The resistance takes effect only when the Holy Power is being applied against you.”

Um...

I think the definition of that distinction will be quite hard to define.

“It will also take effect when the skill’s user judge that the Holy Power is being used negatively against him.”

I think it will be easier to understand after experiencing this a few times.

“Also, I got the Talaria’s Wings skill again. Add some descriptions for this skill.”

“Uung. I just did! Go check it right now.”

“Right now? Aren’t I supposed to go to the waiting room if I want

to see it?”

“It’s all right since it is a skill that you already had. As for the detailed mechanism...”

She probably cannot tell me because the information is expensive.

“Right. Hehet.”

“Status Window.”

Lee Ho-jae (Human)]

Lv. 27

Strength: 34

Dexterity: 47

Vitality: 39

Mana: 30

Skill: Battle Focus Lv.20 Willpower Lv.10 Awakening Lv.2
Night Vision Lv.5 Bright Vision Lv.5 Charge Lv.8 Sneak Lv.11
Meditation Lv.11 Detection Lv.7 Tracking Lv.4 Natural
Regeneration Lv.12 Super Regeneration Lv.5 Strengthened
Senses Lv.14 Widened Senses Lv.8, Energy Sensory Lv.6,
Increased Field of Vision Lv.4 Ironwall Lv.2 Toughened Body
Lv.3 Soul Cry Lv.2 Mid-level Swordsmanship Lv.4 Mid-level
Shield Skill Lv.1 Basic Spear Technique Lv.6 Mid-level Hand to
Hand Combat Skill Lv.2 Basic Throwing Skill Lv.5 Basic
Cooking Lv.1 mana Circuit Lv.15 Poison Energy Lv.4 Wind
Spirit's Blessing Lv.5 Familiarity with Spirits Lv.2 Knowledge
of the Time before Babel Lv.6 Soul Steal Lv.5 Mind Corruption
Immunity Lv.3 Great Pain Resistance Lv.3 Bleed Resistance
Lv.10 Faint Resistance Lv.6 Pierce Resistance Lv.4 Great Poison
Resistance Lv.3 Paralysis Resistance Lv.14 Fire Element
Resistance Lv.1 Cold Resistance Lv.4 Frostbite Resistance Lv.3
Curse Resistance Lv.6 Great Magic Resistance Lv.3 Holy Power
Resistance Lv.1 Perseverance Lv.1 Focused Effort Lv.1 Blink
Emblem Lv.Max Talaria's Wings Lv.Max, Dead Summoning
Lv.???

Misc: God of Slowness is disappointed. God of Adventure is
relieved.

God of Slowness' Trial [Completion rate: 4/11]

God of Adventure's Trial [Completion rate: 97/224]

For some reason, I the progression of the God of Adventure's

trial's surged after the last floor.

Could it be that their difficulties are lower in proportion to the number of assignments?

I folded the question about the trial away for the moment. Instead, I checked the detailed explanation about the Talaria's Wings.

[Talaria's Wing (Lv.Max)]

Description: The original skill was put together in haste by the God of Adventure due to a time constraint. The God of Adventure re-assembled the parts and recreated the skill.

The weaknesses were addressed and new functions were added.

While recreating the skill, the God of Adventure, the creator of the skill, earned the title 'fool.'

Too many of his range of powers are focused in just one skill. When activated, the Talaria's Wings are summoned behind the caster. The wings provide sustainable flight magic to the caster. The wings have very high durability and magic defense. The wings provide increased mana recovery rate to the caster and allies within the range.

The wings provide an effect of empowered combat ability to the caster and allies within the range.

The wings provide an effect of increased magic resistance to the caster and allies within the range.

The wings provide a fear effect to all enemies within the range.

The wings bestow additional strength to the caster (Strength +10)

The wings can change color based on the caster's will.

Talaria's Wings do not require the caster's mana, mental focus or Holy Power to cast it.

What the hell is this?

... Seriously, really... what the hell is this?

When I saw that the God of Adventure got the title of 'fool' from this, I should have noticed that something was off.

I didn't think too much of it because God of Adventure seemed to have a very apparent dense side, but...

Just what is this? This is one ridiculous cheat-like skill.

[God of Adventure is proud.]

[God of Slowness is sighing.]

Chapter 83 - Tutorial 60th Floor (Part 8)

“My name is not Yong Yong.”

Now what’s this now, straight out of the blue.

“Hey, Yong Yong, would you like to eat a hotdog?”

“Yes!”

It seemed Yong Yong was happy about the thought of eating hotdogs. He smiled adorably for a moment, but then he suddenly put up a stern face and yelled again,

“My name is not Yong Yong!”

[I knew this would happen.]

The clone bastard was sitting next to me. He tried to get on my nerve, but I ignored it.

“Yong Yong. If your name is not Yong Yong, then who is Yong Yong?”

“It’s not Yong Yong!”

Ugh.

Well then, that Benedictus... Raocones what not... Are you talking about that?

“My name is Benedictus Raylisia Piakhan Raokones Nafplion Nistiamat Karusearin Valakas Shyanso Karuddanthes Nesaria the Third.”

That’s a super long name, yet you had no difficulty pronouncing each and every syllable. I think my Yong Yong could be a news anchor when he grows up.

You didn’t get tongue twisted. You didn’t smudge any of the pronunciations either. Have you been practicing?

[It seems he had been doing it before sleeping every night.]

Ah, he really was practising.

“That’s right. My Yong Yong’s name is Benedictus Raylisia Piakhan Raokones Nass Timat Karusearin Shyanso Karuddanthes Nesaria the Third.”

“No! It’s Benedictus Raylisia Piakhan Raokones Nafplion Nistiamat Karusearin Valakas Shyanso Karuddanthes Nesaria the Third!”

Which part did I get wrong?

I can't even figure that out.

"Of course, of course. You are right."

How else am I supposed to console him?

[Just memorize the Benedict-whatever name. Won't that be faster?]

I don't want to do that.

"Yong Yong. Do you know what your daddy's name is?"

"I know. Daddy's name is Daddy!"

"No. Daddy's name is Lee Ho-jae."

Yong Yong's large eyes started to panic.

"That cannot be... It's Daddy..."

"My name is Lee Ho-jae, Yong Yong. Daddy is a title that a son calls the parent by."

"A title?"

“Yes. Of the parents, man is Daddy, and woman is Mommy.”

Yong Yong tried mumbling the words Daddy and Mommy. It seemed he deep in contemplation.

“So, my Yong Yong, your name is Benedictus Raylisia Piakhan Raokones Nafplion Nis Tiamat Karusearin Valakas Shyanso Karuddanthes Nesaria the Third... However, I am calling you Yong Yong as a nickname.”

“Is that why you call me that?”

“That’s right.”

It seemed Yong Yong was satisfied with the answer. He smiled adorably again.

He smiles so photogenically.

While I had the chance, I nudged a fairy worm in Yong Yong’s mouth.

Fortunately, he didn’t complain. Instead, Yong Yong chewed the worm and swallowed it.

Oh my, you are eating well.

Yong Yong, even if it is something as simple as watching you eat deliciously, these things brings smiles to your Daddy.

“Daddy.”

“What is it, Yong Yong?”

“Then who is Mommy?”

It was an unexpected question. My face, which was smiling, was now petrified in horror.

[That ruined it. You just activated a trap card.]

Hey, help me.

[How am I supposed to help in this situation? You want me to pretend to be the Mommy? You already told him that a female parent is the Mommy?]

Hey, clone bastard...

[What, original bastard.]

You, do YOU want to try sex change operation?

[You crazy bastard.]

*

In the end, I told Yong Yong that his Mommy will come when he grows up a little longer. I cleverly placed hotdogs and pizza on top of the lie to turn away Yong Yong's interest in the subject.

[Have more excuses prepared for the future or try making a female homunculus.]

If possible, I would prefer not to make an intelligent being.

If my symptoms of schizophrenia act up again, then that could be a serious problem.

Especially when I even have Yong Yong now...

[Well, that's true.]

Yong Yong was sitting at the table and noisily munching on pizza. I wiped the cheese from below Yong Yong's chin as I looked around.

This was a family restaurant that the clone bastard, Yong Yong and I built a few days ago.

I could still smell the paint from the wall, but I didn't bother to erase the smell from the wall using magic.

The paint was harmless to the body to begin with. Also, it wasn't like there was paint in existence that could harm me, the clone bastard or Yong Yong.

Although it was not a pleasant smell, it somehow made me feel like a normal person in society.

The scenery definitely had changed.

I can see the world in different color.

It's a good thing.

I stroke Yong Yong's head once and brought out this month's newspaper from the inventory.

The clone bastard saw me do this, and he also brought out a book.

It was a book that I wrote by recalling a fantasy novel that I read back in school days.

It had been 20 years since I read the book. Of course, it would normally be impossible to write it all down from memory without getting anything wrong.

However, I could remember things from my past at will, even the ones that I thought I forgot due to passage of time.

As a reward for babysitting Yong Yong while I restored half-destroyed residential area, I allowed the clone bastard to stay and I wrote the novels for him to read based on the memories of what I read in the past before I entered the Tutorial.

Yong Yong addressed the clone bastard as uncle and followed him as well.

I was concerned that Yong Yong might find this confusing because the clone bastard looked exactly like me. However, Yong Yong used mana to identify the differences between me and the clone and distinguished us apart.

It had been a while since Yong Yong, my clone bastard and I have started spending days like a family.

Also, what I had been thinking lately is...

[Oh my, you sure are sensitive.]

Ugh, this god damn telepathy.

Do you really have to intrude in my private life?

“You think I’m hearing them because I want to? Yong Yong, eat up.”

The clone bastard gave another slice of pizza to Yong Yong before returning to reading the book.

Ugh that rascal.

I should just read the newspaper.

[Kim Min-hyuk, former leader of the Order of Vigilance, is forming a new Awakened Warriors Clan?]

Um...

I thought this rascal would go to the Blue House, but he is making a clan...

Well, I’m sure he will do well.

Kim Min-hyuk is one of the two people who know about my plan.

He even promised that he will have things prepared for my plan. The Awakened Warriors Clan must be also related to that.

This is different from what I heard before, but if he changed his mind after seeing the situation in the outside world, then I trust

his judgement.

I'm sure he will handle things well on his own.

[A newly developing rivalry in Hell Difficulty? Brian from America and Lee Yun-hye from Korea. Their similarities and differences?]

Brian from America was a Hell Difficulty player who was known to have cleared the 31st Floor.

The 31st Floor is not an easily cleared. He is one amazing guy.

Now that he cleared 31st Floor, he cannot return to the 30th Floor's residential area.

It means he must charge toward the 60th Floor no matter what.

Alone.

I'm sure he probably knows what this means. After all, he is a player who got past the 30th Floor in the Hell Difficulty.

I am not sure if this will give him courage or make him reckless.

Lee Yun-hye had been receiving much attention lately from the outside world.

She seems to be compared to me more often than to Brian.

She was called the second Lee Ho-jae or given a title with a similar idea.

Personally, if I am to compare Brian and Lee Yun-hye, I would evaluate her more highly than Brian.

Even the newspapers are assessing her to be superior to Brian despite the fact that she was at a lower floor.

Of course, that's how it should be. After all, I was the one who guided her.

She is practically my successor.

Also, I don't think she has an objection to being called my successor.

To be fair, Lee Yun-hye has a negative side too. Although her progress is very steady, her clearing speed is very slow.

[That's still pretty fast.]

If you consider the power she has, it is actually on the slow side.

She grew up to as a dual-class warrior that merges the archer and spell caster. She even mastered hidden skills and developed ways to use them when the method of obtaining them were completely unknown.

She uses potions like water. Even in a slightly dangerous stage, she carries a lot of expendable items.

She now has over twenty summon spirits and monsters.

She even has two Power Skills.

However, she is still only at the 13th Floor.

Does that make sense?

Honestly, she should be at 40th Floor by now.

[Not everyone is like us.]

Frustration was slowly creeping up on me. Yong Yong seemed to read my emotions. He stopped eating pizza and looked at me.

I told him it was nothing and redirected his attention to the pizza.

I think I should eat some pizza too.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Big Bro, were you looking for me? I was on my way to the 91st Floor, so I didn't get to see the message.]

I put the pizza down again.

I left Yong Yong in my clone bastard's care and left the family restaurant.

I contacted Lee Jun-suk because, as Park Jung-ah said before, I wanted to try convincing him that it was time for him to go to the outside world.

It has been a very long time since he started his isolated training at the 90th Floor.

Now, the time he spent at the 90th Floor exceeded the time he spent going from the First Floor to the 89th Floor.

Isn't it really about time you returned to the outside world?

There are families and friends waiting outside for him, and he even has a contract with the Korean government.

Actually, in the outside world now, the media have been yapping about a conspiracy theory on Lee Jun-suk. They claimed that the Hard Difficulty player named Lee Jun-suk died a long time ago and that the Order of Vigilance is hiding this for the their own benefit.

Now, it is really time for him to go.

Repeatedly, I told him that it was time to go for ten minutes.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Is that so... Is it really time for me to return?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: That's right you rascal. Please go back to the outside world. Other than the NPCs, the only first-year members who still remain in the Tutorial are just you and me. Aren't you sick of this place?]

As for me, I would like to leave the Tutorial, but I cannot.

In the past, I felt that he and I were similar when he stayed at a residential area for the sake of growth. I was sympathetic toward him.

He made me feel better. I was thankful as well.

However, now, it really was time for him to return to the outside world.

Lee Jun-suk was silent for a moment. He then sent me a message that detracted from the topic.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Big Bro, I thought I was the main

character. I think I've been living that way.]

Was that the reason why?

I already know well enough about his goals and the things that he had been agonizing over.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Big Bro... You and I... We are very different, right?]

Of course.

Fundamentally, you and I cannot even be compared.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: In that case... what if you made comparison based on your former self when I met you in person before?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: As of now, you are a little stronger in comparison to my former self.]

Lee Jun-suk paused for a long time again.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: When I got to the residential area and learned that the effectiveness of training in this place is not adjusted based on the difficulty, I thought about this.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: What did you think about?]

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: I thought that, if I stayed at a residential area and continued to grow for a long time, I might be able to catch up to you someday. However... As the time went by, the gap in our abilities only widened.]

That's unfortunate.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Big Bro. In your case, it's probably difficult to expect any more growth at the 61st Floor. It's the same here for me. There is nothing for me to gain at the 91st Floor now. The only thing I can still do is train by myself at the residential area. I know that there is no growth acceleration effect at the residential area, but... I wonder why...]

It's a sad story to hear.

Lee Jun-suk probably isn't asking me these questions because he doesn't know.

He knows the answers, but he just does not want to acknowledge them.

People always treated me like an outlier.

They didn't even try to compare themselves to me.

Because of this, I always welcomed Lee Jun-suk, and I was thankful.

He saw me like a normal person like him and tried hard to catch up to me.

At first, he probably thought that the differences between us was due to the fact that I entered the Tutorial a few rounds before him.

He probably still believed that up to around 40th Round.

After that, he probably thought that it was the difference in the difficulty.

He probably continued to believe that for another 40 Rounds while I got stuck at this residential area.

The next reason could be found not in me but Lee Jun-suk.

After his long pause, he sent me a response as if he organized his thoughts.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Big Bro, I'll go back to the outside world in the next round.]

I don't know what to tell him now.

Based on personal experience, I knew that it will become a huge scar for him if I said anything to console him in a situation like this. I just kept my mouth shut.

Now that I think about it, something like this has not happened ever since I stopped being a professional gamer.

Ever since I gained power in Tutorial, Lee Jun-suk was the only one who would seriously consider me as a rival.

There may have been others who were qualified to stand next to me, but they didn't bother revealing themselves.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Big Bro, I'll be leaving the Tutorial first. I'll wait for you, so you have to clear the Tutorial and return too.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Yes. See you at the outside.]

Other than that, I couldn't say anything else.

The good memories we shared, my gratitude, apologies, how I enjoyed his friendship...

I had many things to say, but I only had a few words that I could actually tell him.

If we get another chance to talk before he leaves the Tutorial,

then I hope that I'll be able to ease up and give him my heartfelt farewells.

Of the five bracelets on my arm, one of them made a cracking noise and shattered.

These were the safety devices I made after I half destroyed the residential area.

In the past, this was not a problem for me since I lived alone. However, now that I had Yong Yong, I had a need to be careful with my power.

I think I should go make another safety device.

Even if it is bothersome, I should maintain five of them.

I suddenly got worried about the clone bastard.

He probably got the shock from my emotion too.

I quickly entered the family restaurant. The first thing I saw immediately was the clone bastard crying in unsightly manner and Yong Yong consoling that pathetic clone bastard.

“[I... Iruril... Uuuuhurrrrrrrng...]”

[TL: Iruril is a beautiful female elf character from Dragon Raja, a famous Korean fantasy novel by Lee Young-do that started the fantasy novel boom in Korea.]

Ah, that lunatic...

What is he doing with my face.

“[The book... The book is over... The Autumn of Magic is over... Uhuhuhunghuk...]”

*

Concerned, Yong Yong was still looking at the clone bastard. Yong Yong was licking his hand. I had Yong Yong sit on my lap and asked the clone bastard.

“Was the book that sad?”

“It’s a masterpiece... Amazing masterpiece! The author is a genius! Even Shakespeare cannot be compared to him.”

“But you never read Shakespeare before.”

The clone bastard completely ignored what I just said and continued yapping away.

“Hey. Is there another work by this author? Hey, there are, right? There must be, right? You read it, right? Write it too, please.”

“There is one, but...”

“Hey, do I have to get on my knees and beg? Should I? Should I take my clothes off and prostrate?”

Take clothes off? Why? Are you a pervert? Stop it already, you lunatic. What do you think you are doing? Don't you see you are in front of a child?

“Just wait a day. I'll write you a story about a bird that died quickly.”

“What's that about? A journal about a bird?”

“It's a masterpiece on the level of a nuclear explosion, so just shut up and wait.”

Chapter 84 - Tutorial 14th Floor (Waiting Room)

[Welcome to the 14th Floor's waiting room.]

[Round 15, Day 30, 04:15]

I said goodbye to Kiri Kiri and moved to the waiting room. As usual, I felt empty.

I wish I could sleep longer at the field and chat with Kiri Kiri while eating all sorts of things.

However, I have too many things to do now.

At minimum, I need to check everything I gained so far before the tournament starts.

First...

[Talaria's Wings]

I tried summoning the Talaria's Wings.

Talaria's Wings used to look like just crystal sculptures. Now, the

wings had changed, starting with the exterior.

First of all, now the pair really looked like wings.

The wings were still made of beautiful crystals. However, how should I describe them... Them look a little smoother and flexible?

Also, the color was changing constantly.

From red to yellow, to green, to blue... to purple...

Including black and white, the wings even assumed semi-transparent tint.

Because of the wings mysterious beauty, I looked into the wings for a moment.

The description definitely said the caster could set the wings' color.

It seemed that the wings were changing the color constantly because I didn't choose one yet.

Instead of picking a color, I think leaving the wings be like this will look prettier.

Wow...

I'm incredibly satisfied with seeing the color changes like this?

[God of Adventure is proud.]

Now, let's check out the wings' performance side.

[You temporarily acquired flight ability.]

[Stamina and mana recovery rates increased.]

[Combat abilities increased.]

[Great Magic Resistance Skill's effectiveness increased.]

[The skill makes the enemies around you shrivel. Enemies that are weak against Holy Power will shrivel in fear even more.]

[Power increased.]

[You acquired the title, 'The Man Who May Become the Apostle of Ditzzy God.']

Wha....

What...

[God of Slowness is clicking tongue while looking at a certain someone with no manners.]

As I thought, this is no joke.

Isn't this a serious over balance?

I'm surprised that there are no limitations. The skill does not spend any power either.

Even the Blink Emblem had the five-times use limitation.

However, the Talaria's Wings had no limitation. I could have it on for 24 hours, for 365 days, even though the skill had several incredible effects.

The skill did come with a strange title for me, but I couldn't care less about that.

I feel like I just hit the jackpot on the lottery.

It's the best, God of Adventure!

I always knew that the God of Adventure will achieve something great one day. I believed in it since a long time?

As I thought, God of Adventure is a true talent who is destined to greatness through steady steps!

[God of Adventure is flexing the ego.]

[God of Slowness is throwing the pillow at certain someone.]

[God of Slowness is yelling 'get out' to certain someone.]

It is incredible that the Talaria's Wings have so many features, but the bigger interest was in the details of the effects themselves.

Let's see how much the combat abilities, Great Magic Resistance, and stamina and mana recovery rate had increased.

Also, I should check out the flight ability too! Damn it! There are no enemies around me, so I won't be able to test out the shrivel ability.

I don't think I'll be able to sleep before I check out all of these.

Let's check them all out quickly.

Quickly...

*

Eating the sandwich that I made with bread, canned tuna and cabbage that I purchased from the store, I checked out the performance of the Talaria's Wings abilities again.

The performance verification, which took several hours, gifted me with great satisfaction.

In Perseverance Skill, the one that I received from God of Adventure, there is a description like this.

Your combat ability increases by 'a small' margin.

The margin was 'small' because the skill's level was still only at one.

However, the Talaria's Wings had Max level. There were no descriptions about the margins either.

What I found out through the performance verifications was that the margin of improvement constantly changed.

To be precise, it depended on how accustomed I was to the skill. Also, the margin of improvement changed depending on my strength.

In other words, the boost effects included in the wings are the type that grows in proportion to my specs.

This is the best.

I swallowed the sandwich I had in my mouth and got up.

I jumped, tightened the fists and mimicked a celebratory pose of a famous soccer player.

Wow!

[God of Adventure is amused.]

[God of Adventure is happy.]

[Round 16, Day 0, 00:00]

[The tournament will start.]

[Please enter.]

[Time left until the mandatory summoning: 4 minutes 59 seconds]

*

-Park Jung-ah's perspective-

[You cleared 42nd Floor of the Tutorial in Easy Difficulty.]

[Welcome to the 43rd Floor's waiting room.]

[Round 15, Day 25, 17:30]

That was close.

If I was even just a little late, I would not have had enough time to take care of work.

“Everyone, thank you all for your hard work. The tournament will start in five days, so rest until then.”

Although the members were dismissed like that, it was not like everyone could rest easy.

I went to a corner of the waiting room and brought out a desk, a chair and a stack of papers from the inventory.

It is time for me to do some work.

Just like me, other members of the Order who had paperwork to push looked like they were about to die as they brought out desks and chairs like I had.

There is a mountain of paperwork I need to take care of before the tournament commences.

I was never a diligent person like this...

Tsk.

“Excuse me... Commander?”

“Yes. What is it?”

“Would you like me to brew a cup of tea for you?”

“It’s fine. I’ll brew a cup myself later.”

It was Lee Yuu-jung, a member of the Order and my party member.

She is two years older than me.

She was with me at the waiting room during the Round One. She had been with me before the Order of Vigilance was established.

She is also my closest friend.

She is always kind and hard working.

It was just that... She didn't understand at all as to why I don't want to show close friendship with any members of the Order in public.

Perhaps she was not even trying.

I also don't intend to try to make her understand either.

There aren't many genuinely pure hearted people like Lee Yuu-jung.

I don't want to explain in verbose detail as to why we can't act close in front of other people.

I was about to read the paperwork, but Lee Yuu-jung came next

to me and told me a news that I could not ignore.

“Mr. Kim Chul-min, a Normal Difficulty player at 24th Floor, died.”

“What about other party members?”

“They are all safe.”

My head is getting convoluted with all sorts of thoughts.

At times like these, I need to organize one thing at a time.

First, I sent a message to Kim Min-hyuk.

It was to report to him about Kim Chul-min’s death and ask him to investigate the circumstance of his death.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: ... About to die.]

[Park Jung-ah, 42nd Floor: No. I’m telling you. He is already dead. Did you understand me correctly?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: No, I’m saying I’m about to die.]

He was whining about serious work load as always, saying things were too difficult for him.

How could he be in position to complain when he is sitting comfortably at the residential area and focusing only on administrative work? Unlike him, I have to worry about my image to the people and carry out the tasks of clearing stages and administrative work.

I ignored Kim Min-hyuk's further messages and went back to focusing on organizing my thoughts again.

“Who is the sub tanker in the 3rd division?”

“3rd division... It's Park Su-hyun. He is a Normal Difficulty player at 22nd Floor.”

“When this round... No. When the tournament ends, let's issue the Idrean's Shield to him. It would be better if we could send him a higher-level shield, but...”

“We don't have enough spare points.”

“Probably. Let's ask him to hold out with that for now. The 3rd Division members will have it hard for a while.”

Kim Chul-min was a member of the Order's Strike Division. The division was not related to clearing stages.

He was the main tanker of the 3rd Division.

The Order's Strike Division was formed with the goal of having the division step in first and neutralize unexpected situations in large-scale events like the day of the great harmony or the tournament.

The members of the Strike Division were required to step in as a party or an individual when unexpected situations occur in residential areas or waiting rooms.

Such situations didn't happen all the time, but I must be always prepared.

When unexpected problems come crashing down, the behavior of the unprepared is far off from the prepared.

Also, that difference in actions taken will decide the survival and the future.

Right now, this Order of Vigilance and myself are the proof of this.

I am currently alive like this and taking care of administrative work for the Order, and this is the result of a man who were prepared when the very first day of the great harmony happened.

He was determined to see his plan through even if it meant attacking others and beating the crap out of them to bend their will.

Also, to make that possible, he had secured enough power for that goal.

Thanks to his kindness, I am now...

I suddenly remembered what happened during the day of the great harmony last time.

There was the issue of my attitude toward him which was brought up to my attention.

Also, requests were made, asking me to relax my attitude toward him.

Also... Ah... Uu... Why did I act like that?

I just had to take it easy and greet him casually in none-honorary terms. That would have been the end of it.

Even a kindergartener could do that.

However, back then... I stuttered and totally panicked.

I am certain I even blushed.

I probably looked ridiculous. I am certain about this.

Also, while I was talking like that, even the pitch of my voice was all out of wack.

Uuuuaaa!

I suddenly felt the urge to get up and scream.

I hurriedly buried my head on the desk and pushed down the urge.

Uuuuuuu...

I felt a presence from the side, so I lifted my head. Lee Yuu-jung was staring at me, wondering why I was doing that.

Ugh... Let's just get back to work.

*

[Round 15, Day 29, 03:20]

[Dangerous Individuals Assessment Report]

Can you make a more official sounding title for the report?

While I complained about a trivial matter, Lee Yuu-jung poked at my waist from the side.

“Here, drink this tea.”

“Thank you, Big Sis.”

So that others could not hear me, I expressed my gratitude to her as if I was whispering. I looked around myself.

Other members of the Order, who were pushing the papers around me, all dozed off.

If they were being lazy, I would have shaken them, awaken them and yelled at them.

Although we were at the waiting room where the body was recovered automatically, focusing on paperwork for a long time naturally made our mind tired and lead us to sleep.

We have not figured out the cause of this exactly yet. However, the prevailing theory at the moment was that the brain is not able to recognize the waiting room’s recovery effect and it is forcing the body to sleep regardless.

I do not know what is causing it.

I think it might be a simple matter of differences in mental strength. I think it might be a matter of will as well.

Anyway, everyone around me, who were obviously dozing off, had fallen asleep after working hard to their limits.

I decided not to wake them up.

We had taken care of most of the paperwork in the past four days, so...

Let's just focus on my own work.

List

Detailed Description

Counter Measure

Like the title, the sub-titles were made haphazardly as well.

Just who wrote this report?

[Writer: Lee Ho-jae]

Ah...

Um... Let's get back to work.

First, I looked over the list.

Lee Gi-min: Danger level 1

Lee Gi-chul: Danger level 1

Jung Jin-uu: Danger level 2

Lee Gi-jun: Danger level 2

Lee Jun-suk: Danger level 3

Lee Hyung-suk: Danger level 5

Lee Chan-yong: Danger level 6

The Order had been making a list of dangerous individuals like these people and managing them.

We had been since the Order was established.

Most of the people who made it to the list had been living quietly without causing much trouble.

However, many of the criminals who were executed for having caused troubles were those who got their names listed in the Dangerous Individuals List.

Because of this, the Order of Vigilance never stopped making the list.

Instead, we had been making the list proactively.

At each round, we changed the observer and continued to make new lists and watched the people who had their names on the list.

It was not a pleasant kind of work.

Sometimes, the work involved watching someone by assuming that the person might be a dangerous one when that person actually had been living peacefully.

To make an excuse to say this was not a bad thing, we were just keeping them under surveillance and nothing further.

We didn't interfere with their lives. We didn't cause them troubles either.

We just kept them under surveillance and carried out the arrests and punishments when they were found to be committing crime.

I tried making an excuse, but I didn't feel like this was all right.

I think I'll just have to acknowledge it.

It is not all right.

However, it is necessary.

I checked the detailed descriptions about the people on the list and flipped a page over.

What would be the counter measures that he came up with?

Counter Measures: Follow Kim Min-hyuk's plan.

... Um.

[Park Jung-ah, 42nd Floor: What is that plan?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: What plan? I don't know.]

... Um.

He must have written it like this because he had a good reason.

Let's just ask him later.

I organized the Dangerous Individual Report and set it aside. I brought out booklet of paperwork from the inventory.

It was information about the past crimes in Tutorial and the involved criminals.

All this time, I have read them over and over, so the booklet became tattered already.

I think I should make a copy soon.

Although they are things from the past, they are also records of things that we should never forget.

We must remember what happened in the past and prepare so that something like these will never repeat in the future.

To that end, we need to keep the memories of what happened in the past in our head.

The circumstances that lead to the incidents.

The perpetrators' motives and characteristics.

How the incidents ended and the counter measures.

We need to continue to analyze such information and think hard about crime prevention, response and punishment.

First Incident

Time: Tutorial Round Two, Day 0 ~ First day of the great Harmony

Rebel Leader: Lee Chang-suk

Summary: On Round Two, Day 0, Lee Chang-suk, the Representative Federation's Commander...

I read this record over a hundred times already. However, I could feel my head cooling down cold as soon as I started reading the first incident.

With that cooled head, I continued to read the record.

[The tournament will commence.]

Chapter 85 - The Tournament (1)

-Lee Ho-jae's perspective-

[Round 16, Day 0, 00:00]

[The Tournament will commence.]

[Please enter.]

[Time left until mandatory summoning: 4 minutes 59 seconds.]

It's finally starting, isn't it?

There isn't much time left until the mandatory summoning.

Unlike the day of the great harmony which happened in middle of the round, the tournament is commencing while we are in the waiting room after the round ended. Perhaps this is why the remainder of time until the summoning is different.

Um... I want to go a little later...

I want to thoroughly check out Talaria's Wings.

Besides, I have more to look at besides the Talaria's Wings.

I still didn't get to test the Fire Element Resistance that I obtained recently.

Using the Poison Energy Skill, I need to raise my Great Poison Resistance Skill as well. I also need to find ways to increase my Curse Resistance and Holy Power Resistance.

I need time for meditation to train Mana Circuit and Energy Sensory as well.

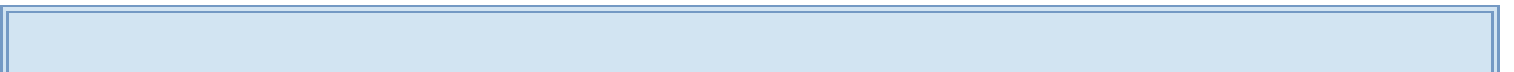
I have a mountain of things to do.

I actually had been looking forward to the tournament.

No matter how I fight in the tournament, I will be the winner of every match, and the one to take the first place. I'll get to check out people from other difficulties, and I can spend the remaining time on raising my skills, so there is nothing bad about the tournament.

The problem is that I ended up with assigned work because of the tournament.

It's all because of Kim Min-hyuk.



[Time left until mandatory summoning: 3 minutes 11 seconds.]

“Teleport.”

[Before the tournament starts, please decide if you would like to participate. You can decide at the arena’s entrance.]

[Tournament, Day 1, 00:02]

[You acquired Tournament: Rulebook (1). Please check the inventory.]

After a moment, the scenery of a village with two to three stories tall wooden buildings was in front of my eyes.

How should I describe this? Doesn’t it looks like a western movie set?

At a plaza that appeared to be the summoning spot, there were people gathered.

I didn’t want to be cramped in middle of the crowd, so I left the area.

“Ah, you there. Please don’t leave. Please wait for a moment.”

I passed by a man who seemed to be under crowd management. He had a megaphone at his mouth, repeating the same words over and over.

“Please don’t leave... Ah, excuse me.”

No, you don’t have to apologize.

“I didn’t recognize you. I am really sorry...”

I was just trying to pass by, yet the man grabbed on to me and continued to apologize. Watching the man vexed me.

If you are that sorry, then you just need to let me go...

“It’s all right. Please carry on.”

The man was still repeating his apologies. Leaving him behind, I continued to walk.

“Hey, I’m here. Doesn’t this place look similar to the residential area?”

Kim Min-hyuk was on the platform. Having heard what I just said, he crumpled his face and said,

“It is not similar. It is identical to the residential area at the 30th Floor. That place was also raised on an open field like this. You never saw it? Anyway, why are you so late?”

I am only two minutes late, you nitpicking rascal.

“Anyway, hold things for me for a moment. You just need to make sure people don’t go away from this place.”

“Didn’t you say you will put me in charge of the people from the Normal Difficulty?”

“No. I don’t think you have to do that anymore. The situation looks way better than I imagined. Right now, our guys are checking out the region, so just keep people here on standby for the next 30 minutes.”

“What about the tournament?”

“I’ll explain that later.”

With those last words, Kim Min-hyuk ran away in a hurry.

Ugh, I ended up with a job that’s even more bothersome.

Still, I won’t have to do this anymore after 30 minutes, so that’s still good.

I got onto the platform that Kim Min-hyuk was on only a moment ago.

“Now, everyone, please pay attention.”

It was loud here with everyone chatting away, so there was no way I was going to be heard if I spoke quietly. So, I used mana and amplified my voice.

The field was busy and loud like a traditional market, but the entire place immediately fell to heavy silence.

Everyone shut their mouths at once and looked at me.

This is a little creepy.

It's like a scene from a horror movie.

“Now, I know you must feel frustrated. You are probably wondering why we need to wait here, right? I am too.”

On top of that, I am also frustrated for having had to deal with a task that I didn't want to do.

“To clearly identify this tournament's area and explain it to you, the friends of the Order are breaking sweats while running around the place. Please wait for just 30 minutes. If they don't tell us

anything in 30 minutes, I'll go complain to them first, so please rest easy and wait."

I thought people might ask questions or complain, but the people all still just kept their mouths firmly shut and stared at me.

In fact, some couldn't even look me in the eyes?

Why is that woman shaking in fear immediately after glancing my eyes?

"Um... Let's sit down and wait. Just think of it as a picnic. Let's all eat snacks. Um... Does anyone have questions?"

I asked, but only terrifying silence filled the plaza.

Somebody ask me something. Please...

However, nobody opened their mouths.

"Well.... Then. Please rest."

Afterwards, I sat down at the platform.

*

This is incredible.

It's been 15 minutes. There are so many people here, yet they are all keeping their mouths shut, not uttering a word.

Occasionally, people whispered to another right next to them, but nobody spoke loudly.

Are they doing silence training as a group?

I thought they would at least bring out snacks and eat them, but instead, they sat like monks and maintained the silence.

It's probably because they are scared of me, the one sitting on top of the platform.

It hurts to see people being so afraid of me.

Just what kind of rumor spread about me?

I knew that people were afraid of me and uncomfortable about facing me, but I didn't know it was to this extent.

I think it is worse, having so many people gathered at one place.

Because of the people who are extremely scared of me, others who had not given it much thought are getting swept in to the mood.

It was never this bad before.

Should I show them more relaxed side of me?

Should I eat something and talk to someone?

I looked around to see if there was anyone I could talk to.

There wasn't any.

I saw Lee Hyung-jin in middle of the people, but I don't think it would be right to call him to the platform and have a conversation with him.

Others will look at him and think he is being dragged to a slaughter house.

As for the members of the Order who were assigned here to manage the people, they thought I was looking around to supervise them.

They look petrified. I could see clearly even from a far.

Even a new recruit standing in front of the Commander in the army would not look this nervous.

This is going too far.

I suddenly came to realize that Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jong-shik had been treating me very comfortably in comparison.

Could it be that they are also a little afraid of me?

Ugh.

With the situation turning out this way, I am getting bored.

Still, if I do things to raise my skills, I think I'll really be treated like a monster, although I think I'm already being regarded as if I'm a monster.

I opened the inventory.

Ah, I had this.

It was the magic textbook that I purchased after clearing the 12th Floor.

I flipped the first page.

‘To bring change to infinite time after death and finite time before life, what is the most important material that must be prepared? Find the answer.’

Recently, I had experienced the changing flow of time at the 13th Floor. What was the thing needed most?

Focus?

The book didn’t show any response.

Do I need to write the answer on the book?

Um... First, let’s think of a different answer.

Mana, ability to think, Holy Power, Power Skill, Spirit, mind, life, death? Attitude, will power...

No, I don’t think those are the answers.

Actually, I think those are needed.

The most important part of this question is the ‘most important material that must be prepared.’

The condition that must be met first to change the flow of time.

Time?

The flow of time?

To change the time, the time needs to exist first, doesn't it?

I don't know if time could be considered as the preparatory material, but...

Um... I reread the question.

As I kept the possible answer 'time' in my head, the words 'after death' and 'before life' were bugging me.

It was talking about before life and after death. It must be indicating that this is about a lifeform at least.

Is 'myself' the answer?

I need to exist first to bring change to time before life and after death, so...

No, it does not have to be myself.

The Priests of Death that I met at the Sixth Floor...

They could change the time before life and after death of others at will.

In that case, as I thought, the answer is life... No, that's not it.

The one possessing the time after death could not be alive.

Um... The one possessing... time? The main character?

The main entity of time?

At that moment, the book was engulfed in light.

After that, words were engraved on to the pages. The pages became full of words.

About a third of the book were decorated with words. It seemed the rest was going to appear once I read all of these.

I wanted to read the book right away, but I had no choice but to set it aside for later because of the commotion around me.

People near me were shaking in fear.

When their eyes met mine, some immediately screamed in low voices.

Some were slowly moving away from me to the back of the crowd.

It looks like they thought some magic spell was going to be shot at them because the book I was holding suddenly shined.

Wow... They are taking it way too far.

*

“Hey. Don’t make me do something like this ever again. People are too scared of me.”

Kim Min-hyuk ignored me and just kept on walking.

“Hey. Be honest. You spread bad rumors about me behind my back, didn’t you?”

“No. I never have.”

“In that case, why are people so afraid of me? Some were almost having seizures.”

That’s too much.

I’ve only made appearances in front of everyone a few times.

The rumors had become excessively exaggerated in the wrong way.

While I was complaining to Kim Min-hyuk, we arrived at the tournament arena.

The place was based on the 30th Floor's residential area's design. The place had residential structures, plaza and special arena.

To explain the arena, it was a grandiose structure.

A colosseum.

The place looked like a western movie, yet there was a colosseum in there, which looked out of place. It was totally breaking the setting. I approached the colosseum's entrance, and a message appeared.

[Please decide if you would like to participate.]

[Individuals] [Day 1]

[Group] [Day 2]

[Would you like to participate in the individual tournament?]

“Are you going to?”

“I should.”

“What about the group tournament?”

“I should do that too, obviously. There is a reward on the line.”

“What about the team members?”

“I should enter the group tournament alone. I gotta have conscience.”

“Um... I don't want you to enter the group tournament alone too and win. That would be a problem.”

Why? Why is that a problem?

“In that case, who could I team up with?”

“Actually, it would be best if you didn't enter at all, but if you are going to enter, have me, Park Jung-ah and a few others on the team.”

“What about Big Bro Jong-shik?”

“If he joins too, then that will be too much.”

Um... This rascal wouldn't be doing this because he wants the prize...

“Is it for publicity?”

“Well, yes, something like that. If you are going to enter and win, then instead of you entering the group tournament alone, we should take advantage of the situation.”

“I got it. Let's do it that way.”

“You need to hold back a little. Don't destroy others' fighting spirit.”

“I got it.”

“Well then, keep up the good work. I'm going to the stands.”

Kim Min-hyuk disappeared afterwards.

It seemed he was teleported to the stands.

[Would you like to enter the arena?]

“Yes.”

I was teleported to a wide ring. It was about 10 meters wide.

The place appeared to be the inside of the colosseum. There were over 20 rings just like the one I was standing on.

There were quite a few people who entered the arena before me.

The rings were not far apart, so I could easily check other challengers.

In the distance, I can see the stands.

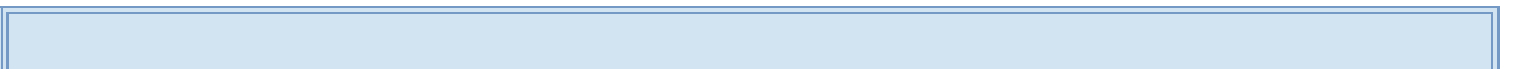
They were the people who chose not to participate and decided to watch instead. There were more of them than I thought.

Ooohhh.... For some reason, I'm getting excited?

The situation is making me think about the World's Greatest Martial Art Tournament from the Dragon Ball.

It's reminding me of my days in the professional gaming too.

I think this will be fun.



[Two minutes from now, the preliminary matches for the tournament's individual rounds will begin.]

[Condition of victory.]

Survive.

Win.

[Condition of defeat.]

Ring out.

Declaring surrender.

As usual, death was not included in the condition of defeat.

The opponents for the preliminary matches were summoned to stand on of the rings.

It's been a really long time since I saw those faces.

Other rings' challengers had clearly panicked expressions after seeing their opponents.

“What is this? Aren't we supposed to be fighting people?”

“Dumbass. Didn't you read the rulebook? You will be fighting other challengers in the real matches.”

“I think that one looks bigger than an orc. Is that a troll?”

“It probably isn't a troll. Hey, be careful. If it is dangerous, surrender immediately!”

“These guys are armed to the teeth! How come their armors look better than mine?”

The colosseum became busy with peoples' chatter about what showed up on the rings.

As for the challengers from lower floors, the opponents that entered the rings appeared to be stronger than what they expected, so they panicked.

Some challengers surrendered immediately and disappeared from the ring right after confirming their opponents.

[One minute from now, the preliminary matches, the first

event of the tournament's individual round, will begin.]

Anyway, I could not hide my disappointment.

The preliminary matches' opponents were seven of Hell Difficulty's mountain goblins.

Chapter 86 - The Tournament (2)

Over two meters tall, bulging muscles, violent face...

Even at a first glance, I could tell that they aren't small fries.

On top of this, their armaments were quite impressive as well.

They wore quality metal armor and wielded metal weapons.

However, the Hell Difficulty's mountain goblins' true power lies in their intelligent combat execution and well-planned formations.

Two soldiers with shields stood at the frontline with two spearmen right behind them, using their long spears to keep the enemies in check.

Behind them are two archers providing supporting fire from relatively safe distance.

They even have a swordsman to fight off the enemies that manage to break through their defense. The seven-soldier formation is not easy to pierce.

Challengers who had always been in groups when fighting monsters must be feeling uncomfortable.

Unlike their past experiences, they would now have to do the

reverse and be the monster who runs wild, aiming to break through a team's formation.

The power of a proper formation had been proven many times throughout the humanity's long history of war.

There is only one thing that's needed to break the formation alone: overwhelming power.

Overwhelming power in comparison to the goblins.

There are not many challengers who possess such power.

The Tutorial had completed fifteen rounds already. However, only few challengers had been charging forward wholeheartedly toward growth and clearing stages since entering the Tutorial.

There are probably only a few challengers who could overwhelm the goblins.

To think that these goblins would appear at the preliminary matches...

Now that I think about it, it is a good setting.

First, those who are not used to or are weak in solo fighting will be disqualified.

Considering that this is the individual round, people who were familiar with supporting others from the rear are unlikely to do well.

The lower floor challengers who entered the match out of curiosity will also get disqualified.

The difficulty is appropriate for weeding out challengers who lack the qualifications to be in the main match.

On top of this, these goblins are defense oriented. Considering their tendencies, they are perfect opponents for the preliminary matches.

It's just that, for me, they are such a disappointment. What a letdown.

I looked at other rings.

“Kuuuuhhhk... I... I surrender!”

That was quick.

An archer was pouring out a barrage of attacks from a distance, but he quickly declared his surrender soon after.

The goblins had their shields in the front and safely closed the distance toward the archer.

When they got near enough, the swordsman that was standing behind the shields quickly dashed forward and tackled the archer to the ground.

The archer immediately declared surrender.

The goblins were teleported away, and the archer was teleported to the stands.

From the looks of it, I think the challengers who specialize in long-distance combat will have hard time getting past the preliminaries.

Unlike challengers who had been shying away from combat or healer types, many of the ranged fighters had entered the tournament.

It seemed they were thinking they could achieve victory before the distance closes in and becomes a one-on-one duel. However, their strategy didn't work at all against the goblins.

The ring next to the archer held a challenger with a heavy axe. He was pounding away diligently at the goblins' gigantic shields.

What the hell are you doing? It's not like you are chopping down firewood.

That's a waste of your strength. What a numbskull.

If he wrestled with the shields like that, the battle will be decided the moment his stamina runs out.

Um... I think more will be disqualified than I thought?

I can see some challengers whose lives might end up in danger if they don't surrender quickly enough.

Challengers of difficulties other than Hell don't have much experience in fighting intelligent opponents like these goblins.

Of course, I'm sure the rankers at higher floors probably have met such, but...

Anyway...

“Why aren't you guys moving?”

[T... This human is speaking our tongue.]

[Kek. Don't be fooled. It's a whisper of the devil. Kiiiak.]

What?

“Instead, why don't you guys just surrender?”

As Kim Min-hyuk said, during the first part of the tournament, it would be best to not showcase too much of my power.

If possible, it would be better to go through this quietly.

I won't get many experience points even if I slew them anyway.

[S... Surrender? Are we allowed to do that? Kiiiiiic.]

[I don't know. Is it alright if we surrender?]

They whispered to each other and entered a discussion.

They exchanged opinions for a long time. Suddenly, they had vacant looks on their faces.

That is...

It's a response similar to when Idy tried to recall her past.

[Kiiiiiic... Kek. We must fight.]

That's unfortunate.

It seemed the system was making it mandatory for them to fight.

“In that case, it cannot be helped.”

I took a step forward, and the goblins’ eyes shook wildly in fear.

[Kiiiaaak! Kiiiac! Please, go easy on us!]

One of the goblins were especially cowardly.

“I got it. I’ll go easy.”

[Fool! You must not expect mercy from the devil. That will lead to a disastrous outcome.]

Why do these guys keep calling me the devil? We’ve never met before.

That’s spoiling my mood.

I kicked off the ground and jumped to the front of the shields.

I pounded the top of the shield with my feet.

Kwang!

Along with loud echo, one of the shield soldiers and an archer got

thrown to the outside of the ring.

I lightly swung my fist at the other shield soldier who was clearly dumbfounded. The soldier's jaw was turned. I took his shield and smacked the swordsman with it.

I dodged the spears thrusting towards me and narrowed the distance.

As for the spearmen, I struck them both equally at the pits of their stomachs. They fainted.

As for the remaining archer...

[E... easy...]

“Easy?”

The goblin nodded hard.

[Yes. Go easy! Go easy!]

I am not sure if he is asking me to go easy on him or deliver him a swift, painless death.

“Try turning around.”

I struck the rear side of the obedient archer's neck and he collapsed on the spot.

This is the first time for me to successfully make someone faint by striking the rear side of the neck.

This is hard to use for some reason in real combat.

I cannot say that I skillfully made him faint like how the main characters in movies do. I just struck him with a decent amount of force and forced him to consciousness, so it looked rather crude.

Anyway, I think I met the challenge condition for the preliminary match.

[You passed the preliminary match of the tournament's individual round.]

[The main match of the individual round will start at 12 on the first day of the tournament.]

[Would you like to move to the stands?]

Nah. I didn't even get warmed up yet.

Besides, I can feel the other challengers' gazes from the stands.

They don't need to be so surprised. What I did is nothing compared to anything else I can do.

“Move.”

*

As soon as I moved to the stands, I went to find where Kim Min-hyuk in the stands.

“Hey, I told you to hold back.”

“I did hold back.”

“Yeah right. I saw two goblins being thrown off the ring from just one kick. I definitely saw it with my own eyes.”

“That's what I mean by holding back.”

“Ugh.”

Next to him were Park Jong-shik and Park Jung-ah.

So, the leaders of the Order were all gathered here.

“Big Bro Jong-shik. Did you not enter the tournament?”

“I did. I cleared the preliminary match first and got here.”

Oh....

“Oh....”

“What’s there to say ‘Oh...’ about.”

I can imagine that a ranker of Hard Difficulty on par with someone like Park Jong-shik passing the preliminary match with ease.

“Hey, introduce yourself to her. She will be entering the team match with you. Her name is Ms. Lee Yuu-jung. You know her, right? She is the keeper of the Easy difficulty.”

After Kim Min-hyuk introduced her to me, I said hello to the woman who was sitting next to Park Jung-ah.

“How do you do?”

“Yes. Yes. Thank you.”

What’s there to thank me about?

Is this woman scared of me too?

It seems to be the case. Her attitude screams out her fear.

“Commander, you too.”

I waved my hand at Park Jung-ah who was sitting next Lee Yuu-jung.

Park Jung-ah’s eyes suddenly widened. She panicked and said,

“How!”

The pitch of her voice was all wrong, starting from the very first word.

“How... do you do?”

Why are you being so formal again?

During the last day of the great harmony, we decided that you would talk to me in casual tone.

What was all that embarrassing and awkward conversation for then?

“I! I have a place to be, so... I’ll get going first. See you all later.”

Park Jung-ah bumped into the chair next to her as she got up, stumbling with her legs before she awkwardly left the scene.

What now? What business could you possibly have today in a place like this?

Lee Yuu-jung quickly followed Park Jung-ah.

Park Jong-shik muttered as he watched Park Jung-ah leaving.

“Did her attitude get worse?”

“She is acting awkward like that because of what happened last time at the day of the great harmony, isn’t it? Hey, Kim Min-hyuk... What are you going to do? That just made things worse.”

“I don’t know anymore.”

This is a serious problem.

Last time, during the day of the great harmony, we asked Park Jung-ah to speak to me in casually. We went through that unnecessary spectacle because Park Jung-ah was being excessively respectful toward me.

In that case, how about her attitude towards me now?

This is no longer just about my position in the Order and the strength of Park Jung-ah's leadership's foundation. This is going to damage her image.

"I can't think of anything in particular to fix this. What about you guys? You young people should come up with something."

"I don't know either. Hey, as the person in the situation, is there anything that comes to your mind? You high and mighty rascal?"

High and mighty rascal?

Now where did that title come from?

Um... A way huh...

Park Jung-ah is treating me differently probably because of what happened on the very first day of the great harmony.

It is true that I saved her, so she had a good reason to be grateful towards me.

The only problem is that she had been excessively idolizing me ever since.

It seemed that, in her eyes, I looked like a prince on white horse from a fairy tale.

In other words, because of her fantasy about me, she has a wearing a pair of distorted glasses.

I'm sure that I have demonstrated many times that I am not a perfect person from moral and personality standpoints.

Despite all that, the distorted glasses remained on her eyes.

“The tournament will end around the dinner time, right?”

“From how you are going about it, I think it could end sooner.”

“In that case, let's go drink amongst ourselves.”

“Drinks? That's great. Do you have any?”

Park Jong-shik, with gleam in his eyes, asked.

“Of course. I have quite a few bottles in my inventory.”

It was not a huge quantity of booze. However, it was enough for four people to enjoy.

I had plenty of snacks too.

“I like the idea of drinking too, but... will that help resolve the problem of Park Jung-ah?”

With a little worried face, Kim Min-hyuk asked.

“Well... If you show her how you look after getting all boozed up and making a fool out of yourself like a dog, then that will shatter her fantasy about you.”

“Kiiiiiaaaaa. What a magnificent answer. Let’s play today like idiots!”

Park Jong-shik’s mind was already at the drinking table. He suddenly got up and shouted.

*

[The individual tournament’s main event, the matches will begin.]

Finally, the main matches started.

They are the main event where the challengers duel each other.

[Would you like to enter?]

Hold on.

I ignored the message and opened the rulebook.

The main matches had a pretty unique rule.

It was like a tag match.

Two challengers will duel, where the victor will stay at the arena, and the defeated will be returned to the stands.

With each victory, points are earned, and the final prize will be set based on the points earned.

Uniquely enough, the very first challenger who starts the match will be given bonus points. Also, the final victor has a separate prize.

There were three ways to earn any of the rewards. One could be the first challenger. One could win many times, and finally, there was winning the entire tournament's individual round.

To maximize the rewards, the best thing to do is entering the tournament as the first challenger and achieving multiple victories until you win the entire tournament.

It's just that...

“Hey, you can't enter right now, you understand that, right?”

“I got it, you rascal.”

If I entered now, the main match will end like that.

I really wanted the rewards, but I don't want to get it at the cost of pouring cold water on everyone when they are enjoying the festivities.

Of course, the prize for winning the tournament, the most important reward, will be mine.

Meanwhile, the two challengers chosen start the tournament were summoned to the arena.

They were both melee warriors.

After one minute of standby, the duel started.

This is actually pretty exciting.

The two challengers were on par with each other in strength and skills, so the duel was exciting to watch.

As usual...

“Fight between small fries are most entertaining.”

Park Jong-shik muttered from the side. He shared my thoughts.

“This is super fun to watch. When the tournament occurs again, should we bet money? How about it?”

“Betting on sports? I am not sure. We shouldn’t take gambling so lightly.”

“Even if we don’t, someone else will. It would be better if we open the gambling operations instead.”

“Is that so? I’ll bring it up during our next meeting.”

I brought out a bag of potato chip from the inventory and continued to watch the duel.

Watching their intense battle unconsciously excited me.

Should I enter during the match that’s two matches after this one?

“You need to enter when it is about to end, you got that, right?”

Ugh, I think this guy can look into my mind sometimes.

“What about me?”

“Big Bro Jong-shik. You can’t enter either. Big Bro, did you not forfeit yet? Hurry up and go forfeit. Relax and enjoy the game afterwards instead.”

As days go by, I feel like Kim Min-hyuk is turning more and more into a selfish sister in-law.

Another unique thing about the tournament was that there were no other restrictions during the duel.

All items were permitted.

Expendable single-use items were allowed as well.

There was no restriction about striking critical points either.

In fact, even murder was possible in middle of the match.

This is not like boxing or mixed martial art tournament. Instead, this is closer to duels that took place in real colosseums.

Of course, the Order of Vigilance strictly forbid murder during the tournament.

They could give the circumstance a consideration if the loss of life was a result of unforeseen mistake.

However, if it resulted from even a little bit of intentional motif, they were going to punish the offender

immediately. The Order of Vigilance notified the community actively so that nobody would be caught unaware of the rules.

Not just murder, but the Order also forbid excessive harassment of the opponent and immobilizing the opponent's hands or sealing the mouth to make the opponent unable to surrender.

Because most of the challengers who made it to the main matches were high level rankers, Park

Jong-shik choose to give up the tournament and be on the standby in case of an unexpected situation.

It was so that he could quickly neutralize and punish the perpetrator if such an incident happened.

Several of the Strike Division of the Order were already on the standby. However, some of the participants of the matches were going to be hard for them to handle.

Some said the Order was going too far on restricting things that

were allowed by the system.

However, thanks to the Order's decision, people's minds were at ease, so the number of challengers entering the tournament out of curiosity had increased. In the end, the tournament itself became a more peaceful event.

Meanwhile, Park Jong-shik just could not help himself and entered the preliminary match. However, ultimately, Kim Min-hyuk decided that Park Jong-shik must not enter the main matches.

“Hey, Ho-jae.”

“Yes, Big Bro?”

“Can we switch roles? Can you be the guardian instead of me? If I win the tournament, I'll give you the reward.”

“I don't want to.”

Chapter 87 - The Tournament (3)

[Participant Lee Hyung-jin has achieved the fourth victory.]

[Would you like to enter?]

“Hey, don’t you think it would be all right for me to enter now?”

Having heard what I said, Kim Min-hyuk counted the remaining participants and shook his head.

“Some of the Hard Difficulty’s rankers has not come out yet.”

However, although time had passed, nobody was stepping up to challenge Lee Hyung-jin.

Although Lee Hyung-jin is a challenger from the Hell Difficulty, there are a some high level Hard Difficulty challengers who could stand toe-to-toe with him.

However, it won’t be easy to neutralize Lee Hyung-jin. In the end, the challenger might lose to the next contestant due to the exhaustion and forgo their chance for winning the tournament. It seemed nobody was stepping up out of their own interest.

They were all hoping that someone else will knock down Lee

Hyung-jin.

Ignorance is a blessing.

Are they seriously thinking they can win the tournament? When I'm here? They sure dream big.

[Only one minute remains before Lee Hyung-jin is declared as the victor of the individual tournament.]

[Would you like to enter?]

Many rankers started panicking.

It was the start of the game.

The one who fight Lee Hyung-jin will be distancing oneself from winning the tournament.

However, if nobody steps in, then Lee Hyung-jin was going to win the tournament.

“If nobody steps in by the time there's only 30 seconds left, I'm going to enter.”

“Um... I’m sure someone will challenge him in next 10 seconds.”

“I need to educate the masses about the fact that excessive carefulness and greed, when combined together, will always come back as poison.”

Rankers had been postponing entering the match because they didn’t want to fight Lee Hyung-jin. I wonder how they would feel when I enter?

“Having the guts to step up to the challenge and fighting head on are also necessary.”

“Still, you beating the crap out of Hard Difficulty rankers one after the other is...”

“I’ll go easy on them.”

Kim Min-hyuk didn’t protest anymore.

It was not that he was convinced by my words. It seemed he was just concerned about the tournament becoming stale.

Actually, the tournament was rapidly becoming boring. Some were dozing off. Some were focused more on chatting with someone next to them. The audience slowly lost interest in the tournament.

The Order of Vigilance figured that they might as well provide entertainment to the people through this tournament.

If I entered, I will be able to refresh people's attention and expectations for the tournament.

[There's 30 seconds left until Lee Hyung-jin will be declared the winner of the tournament.]

[Would you like to enter?]

“Yes.”

As soon as I responded, I was teleported to the middle of the arena.

[Tournament's individual match, the main match's 14th duel will start.]

[Participants: Lee Hyung-jin vs. Lee Ho-jae]

[Standby time: 1 minute]

Shouting exploded from the stands.

All right, all right.

Honestly, being showered with attention like this from the audience feels great.

I know. I sound a little like an attention whore, but...

That's how it really feels.

Some retired sports professionals even develop depression because they could not forget this sensation.

I was like that too.

“Big Bro Ho-jae... You entered already? What do we do?”

“Nobody was stepping up, so what could I do?”

“Someone would have entered before the time ran out.”

“But that won't be fun.”

Lee Hyung-jin's face looked as if he chewed something horrible.

The rankers who were engaging in glancing game had the same

look plastered on their faces.

“Ugh. Well, I was not thinking about winning the tournament, but I wanted to have more wins at least.”

“You won enough, you rascal.”

“All right. Big Bro, well then, please go easy on me.”

“I got it, kid.”

[The duel will start.]

As soon as the standby time expired, Lee Hyung-jin quickly dashed toward me.

His best ability was, like myself, his speed.

One thing that was a little different was that, unlike me who could block attacks by fully utilizing the advantages of the sword and shield that I chose as the starting armaments, Lee Hyung-jin relied on dodging.

I sometimes intentionally used my body to block attacks. He was different from me.

He was very safety-oriented. In short, he was a scaredy cat.

That's why, like this...

Boooooong-

I punched the shield with my knuckles, echoing into the wind.

Lee Hyung-jin was coming straight at me, but he quickly changed his trajectory and dodged past me to the left.

His ankles are shaking. Perhaps it is because he had to change the trajectory too quickly.

It looks like he is not able to control his speed very well.

Moreover, he was too conscious of my knuckles when it was not even within effective range. He changed his path too soon.

Against a stupid and blatantly obvious attack like this, you should have attempted to dodge it narrowly and charge in deeper.

Perhaps it is because it had not been long since he entered the Fourth Floor. He is still lacking in his ability to make split-second decisions.

A kick is coming from the back.

It's good that you are attacking from the blind spot, but it is too obvious.

Also, that's not my blind spot anyway.

I snatched Lee Hyung-jin's leg with my hand.

"I surrender!"

Lee Hyung-jin immediately declared surrender.

He gave up too quickly.

"Why didn't you fight me a little longer? You are deflating the balloon here."

[Participant Lee Ho-jae achieved his first victory.]

"Ugh... As I thought, there is a huge difference between us."

"Still, it was not bad. I noticed a few things you should fix. I'll tell you later."

"Yes, Big Bro. Win the tournament!"

After his words of encouragement, he was moved to the stands.

*

After I entered, I wondered if I would win the tournament immediately due to lack of new challengers. However, quite a few rankers came to challenge me.

Maybe it is because the duel between me and Lee Hyung-jin ended rather gently. There were many challengers who wanted to measure their strength against me.

“Thank you for your hard work!”

“Hard work? You don’t really need to say that.”

[Participant Lee Ho-jae achieved his fifth victory.]

That was Lee Jun-suk, the Hard Difficulty’s most promising challenger. After achieving victory against him, I looked at the stands.

I think all rankers who wanted to challenge me already had.

In the distance, there was Kim Min-hyuk. He was cramping his

face as if he was trying to tell me something by mouthing the words.

He is probably trying to say that I should take it easy.

However, I really am holding back here.

I didn't use any skills. I had been neutralizing the opponents using clean and simple movements.

I didn't use any flashy Power Skills either. I had only been using my physical abilities.

It would still be apparent that I am the strongest, but the rankers could think the following.

He is not a complete fiend. Maybe I can beat him.

I had been holding back so they could have such hope.

Since I was in charge of being the force of the Order, I should actually avoid creating such image.

In fact, establishing a more powerful image of myself in people is better for the Order of Vigilance. If I looked overwhelming, then it couldn't be better.

However, the Order had a plan in place for the second tournament where the challengers from foreign nations will also participate.

It was at that moment when a familiar looking man was teleported to the arena.

[Tournament's individual match, main match's 19th duel will start.]

[Participant: Lee Ho-jae vs. Lee Chan-yong]

As soon as the message appeared, loud shouting exploded from the stands.

Oh, I was not expecting this.

Lee Chan-yong.

He is the challenger at the highest floor in the Tutorial.

He is also the challenger that the Order was supporting to achieve the first total conquest of the Tutorial.

He was also the regular who was brought up frequently in discussions in the community about who is the strongest person in

the Tutorial.

There are quite a lot of people who say Lee Chan-yong must be the strongest since he is at the highest floor.

However, nobody knew for certain.

He didn't have anyone who he could compare his strength against.

When rankers are mentioned the term usually refers to the players who were at the higher floors of the Normal and Hard Difficulties.

Normal Difficulty rankers were usually around at 50th Floor. As for the rankers at the Hard Difficulty, they were at around 30th Floor.

Rankers' strengths were assessed based on the floor they were in.

In that case, what about the challenger who is at 89th Floor at the Easy difficulty? What kind of power does he possess?

Nobody knew besides Lee Chan-yong himself.

It was not like anyone else besides him were even close to that floor.

“Big Bro. I thought you would not be interested in something like this.”

As I said, Lee Chan-yong was obsessed with clearing the Tutorial like it was his lifeline.

He didn't pursue strength. He didn't desire challenge either. He didn't want to be entertained.

He just wanted to clear the Tutorial and reunite with his family again.

It's impossible that he was thinking he could beat me and win the prize.

“After some time passed...”

Lee Chan-yong calmed his breathing and said,

“After I got stuck behind a wall, I finally got a moment to spare and look around myself.”

I had already heard that he was having difficulties in clearing the 89th Floor.

I even made a report to the Order based on that information.

“That’s why I entered. To gain experience.”

Experience huh...

Experience is important.

“Please, let us have a good duel.”

“Yes, same here.”

[The duel will start.]

This is a tricky fight.

I’m fighting an opponent with no knowledge of his combat abilities. Meanwhile, I need to hide my own.

From the stands, Kim Min-hyuk was looking at me, concerned.

He probably wants me to have tough fights or even fights one after the other and achieve a narrow victory at the end.

However, a human being’s heart will not always move the way it should.

[Blink]

I used Blink to leap to the front of Lee Chan-yong. I immediately threw a punch at the him.

He raised guard fairly quickly, and my fist struck hard at his guard.

Kwang~

It sounded like an explosive went off as Lee Chan-yong's body flew off to the outside of the ring.

*

“I told you that you should hold back.”

“Ah, I said I am sorry. Why are you still scolding me? Could you please stop?”

The tournament was over. Kim Min-hyuk and I were going to the residential section.

We had to check to make sure everyone left the arena, so we were one of the last ones to leave.

The housing building was a wooden building. It was about 10

stories tall.

There was a large dining hall at the first floor. Starting from the second floor, there were separated rooms tightly packed in the allocated area. The building looked like a motel.

The Order assigned the rooms to the people.

Different floors were assigned for each gender. Different floors were assigned for different difficulties.

Of course, the assignments were not mandatory. If someone wanted to move, then the Order moved their room.

To start with, there were more rooms than the people anyway.

It was just that, ever since the tournament concluded for the day, the people who grew closer started to get together. Requests to move the room became more frequent, and thanks to this, the members of the Order who were in charge of room assignments became busy.

That's what I've heard, although I don't really need to mind this.

Kim Min-hyuk, who was walking next to me, let out a deep sigh.

“Hey. Just what were you thinking?”

“I only used one skill, the Blink.”

“So, you finished it with just one punch? What are you, the One Punch Man? Are you bald, just like the One Punch Man? You completely ruined the plan.”

“I think this is fine too.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Before giving them despair, I wanted to give them a chance too.”

Kim Min-hyuk fell silent for a moment. He then tousled his hair.

“Ugh. I don’t know. I really don’t. It’s already a cup of spilled milk. There’s no point in crying over it.”

That’s right. That’s easier. It’s the right decision too.

Kim Min-hyuk was repeatedly sighing. I ignored him and opened the inventory to check the prize for winning the tournament.

[The mysterious box for the winner of the first tournament]

Description: It’s the prize for the winner of the first

tournament ever held. The box's contents are unknown. However, it will definitely be useful for the winner.

Well, it feels good to win at least.

In the distance, I could see Park Jong-shik and Park Jung-ah waving at us at the front.

It looked like they were waiting for us in front of the residential building.

Now, it's time to drink and play. I suppose I can think of this as a celebration for winning. It's perfect.

It's a perfect plan.

*

As soon as we got to the motel, we went to Park Jong-shik's room and started drinking.

The bottom line was that we were somewhat successful at the drinking table.

Not just myself and Park Jong-shik, but Park Jung-ah and Kim Min-hyuk also had Poison Resistance Skills.

The skill responded to the drinks.

In the end, the four of us could not get intoxicated.

However, we succeeded in getting intoxicated by the mood.

Although we were not getting drunk, we could have fun while drinking and playing drinking games.

In particular, it seemed Park Jong-shik was born to be at the drinking table.

As for Kim Min-hyuk, perhaps because he was stressed so much until now, he was causing a loud ruckus.

I think I never saw Park Jung-ah smile until today.

She always maintained a stiff, emotionless face. Today, she was smiling brightly. Looking at her smile, she really looked like a different person from the usual.

I cannot remember how long it had been since I got to chat away and laugh loudly like this with everyone.

I can recall the drinking table I attended before I nosedived back in my professional gaming days. Perhaps that was the last time?

It was a joyful experience. I even wished that we could have drinking occasion like this often.

I wish we could have even more people next time instead of just the four of us.

It was not just me. The other three had not been living happily ever since they entered the Tutorial.

Each one of us focused on clearing the Tutorial while getting used to exhaustion, tears and death everyday.

Just like I have, I'm sure they could relieve themselves of the stress and anxieties here, even though it is just for a while.

I think the problem with Park Jung-ah's attitude toward me is making progress.

She is still unable to be at ease toward me, but at least the uncomfortableness and awkwardness that she had in her behavior towards me are now gone.

At least now she won't be awkward in front of others when she is talking to me.

After the drinking party ended, I went to my assigned room.

I wish I could play the whole night. However, we drank all of the

booze. Kim Min-hyuk also said that he had something he had to do early in the morning, so we concluded the party and went our separate ways.

Now that I was lying down on the bed, I suddenly felt lonely again.

I was having fun all excited with others and laughing only a moment ago, compared to the quiet, desolate room.

I still have some time left before the morning.

I'll have just enough time to sleep, but because of insomnia, sleep is not coming to me easily.

I stared at the ceiling and counted sheep. In the end, I gave up and sat up.

Should I read a book instead?

I picked up the book I almost read but decided not to last time.

I turned on the stand next to the bed. I was about to read the book, but I heard knocking sound on the door.

Knock knock

The door opened. The one I saw was Park Jung-ah.

She was holding a bottle of wine.

“Would you like another drink with me?”

That’s definitely my wine.

Also, when the drinking party ended, there was no booze left.

Unless she filled the bottle with water and brought it here, there is only one conclusion that could be deduced from this.

“Before the booze ran out, you hid a bottle away, didn’t you.”

“I am sorry. Actually... I wanted to drink it separately.”

“With just me?”

“Yes.”

Honestly, I panicked. I didn’t know what to do.

My panic-stricken mind reflected onto my face. Park Jung-ah looked at me and furrowed her brows a little.

“W... What is it? Do you still see me as just a girl in school uniform? I’m an adult now.”

Are you drunk? You have Poison Resistance, so you couldn’t be.

Park Jung-ah was reciting seductive lines rivaling that of the prelude from some triple X-rated adult movies. However, her voice was shaking, and her words were stuttering awkwardly.

I could see her face was red. She was blushing. She was tightly clutching the door handle as well.

I think she will break into tears if I left her be.

“Drinking together... You don’t want to?”

“No, that’s not it. Come in. Let’s talk as we drink.”

Don’t want to? Of course I want to drink. I’m actually thankful.

Chapter 88 - The Tournament (4)

I opened my eyes after feeling the sunshine pouring in from the window.

It's been a really long time since I've been awakened by the sunlight.

There was no sunlight in the waiting room and the sunlight at Kiri Kiri's field was not strong enough to wake me.

Something was missing. I groggily fumbled around my surroundings.

Park Jung-ah, the one who should be lying next to me, was nowhere to be seen.

I just lay there with vacant look on my face for a while. I remembered Park Jung-ah saying she had something to take care of early in the morning and leaving the room while I was still pretty much asleep.

I got up and sat on the edge of the bed.

I hit the bottle with my foot. It went off rolling.

It was the wine bottle that Park Jung-ah brought yesterday.

It rolled and rolled. It eventually hit the room's door. Looking at the bottle, I thought about Park Jung-ah from yesterday. She was leaning on the door and asking if I would like to have a drink with her.

She probably wanted to say it in cool, composed tone. However, she had awkward look on her face mismatched her intentions. Her voice was completely out of whack like an elementary kid who just entered a debate competition for the first time.

She looked awkward, but she was adorable.

Park Jung-ah entered the room. As for what happened after drinking...

The bottom half of me did its morning stretch after waking up.

It wanted to go pee.

I fixed my pants and thought about last night.

Um... Did I go too far?

I suddenly got worried. Panic flooded into my mind.

She may look like an adult, but she was seven years younger than me.

I think I was inconsiderate toward her.

I'm a little disgusted at myself.

Was it because it's been so long since I did it last time?

It's been a little over year since I entered Tutorial.

Before that... I lived the loser's life. Even when I was a professional gamer, I was so busy that I didn't get to date anyone.

Wow.

Now that I'm thinking about this, I have not done it in a super long while.

It's like a heavy boulder inside my heart has been spirited away. I feel light and refreshed. Maybe that's why.

There was the satisfaction from the action itself, plus the emotional satisfaction of doing the deed.

I thought highly of Park Jung-ah, but not as a potential date.

I thought she was amazing and confident. I cheered for her. However, that was the extent of my thoughts.

I found her boldness and courage to be appealing. However, her emotionless and stiff attitude made me think of her as a skilled comrade over anything else.

However, yesterday, I got to see a different side of her I never knew.

She was cheerful. She had bright smile. Also... what I saw when it was just us last night... She was incredibly attractive.

My feelings for her may have deepened.

I got up and stretched.

Until morning, I drank and even performed a crucial ceremony. However, because my body was that of a super human now, instead of feeling tired, my body was light. I felt amazing.

[Tournament Day 2, 06:10]

I still had time left until 8 am, which was the preliminary round for the tournament.

The tournament was to take place over a total of three days.

The first day was for the individual. The second day was for the

group rounds, and the third was for free activities. That's what I've heard.

As soon as the Order of Vigilance was notified about the tournament, they started to gather more information about it.

Just before the tournament started, they posted all of the gathered information on the community.

I was busy clearing the 13th Floor, so I didn't have the time to read this.

It was very late, but I opened the community and read about the tournament.

To summarize,

1. During the tournament, no protective or healing effects will be provided.
2. The very first tournament will be held for the three waiting room days before the round 16 starts.
3. First day is for individuals. Second day is for groups. Third day is for free activities.
4. Anybody can choose to participate or opt out of the tournament.

5. Once the group tournament ends on the second day, anyone can return to the waiting room.

6. Tournament will take place in multiple sessions.

7. The tournament's size will grow over each session.

8. The second tournament in the future includes keyword, 'foreigners.'

Of the information gathered, the Order is most concerned about the first one.

People will be gathered here for three days. People could agitate one another and cause unruly fights.

So far, it seemed nothing big had happened.

I closed the community and changed clothes.

I still had time left until the tournament. I pondered if I should go check out things outside or if I should read the magic book, but I got a message from Lee Hyung-jin.

[Lee Hyung-jin, 4th Floor: Big Bro, do you have time now?]

*

“Big Bro! Over here!”

You don’t have to shout. I can hear you just fine.

With my hearing, I would have heard him even if he whispered from that distance.

He was waiting for me at the opposite end of the colosseum’s main entrance.

At the open space, there were six others besides Lee Hyung-jin.

They were all challengers of Hell Difficulty.

“Oh, good morning.”

“Yes, Big Bro, good morning.”

“Hello. It’s been a while. Did everyone sleep well yesterday?”

I greeted everyone.

Until now, other than Lee Hyung-jin, the Hell Difficulty challengers were all afraid of me, so I didn’t have much expectations from greetings. However, they all brightly greeted

me.

Some even smiled when they said hello.

After all, they were away from waiting rooms and tutorial stages that exuded a deadly atmosphere. They were now at the tournament with festivities. It seemed everyone was in good mood.

Lee Hyung-jin asked me about my opinion of him from the duel.

He also asked me to give advice for himself and others in areas that they lacked.

Of course, I abided to his wishes.

Other Hell Difficulty players developing further was a good thing in many ways.

I might end up doing party play with them one day.

It bothered me a little that they were afraid of me. However, seeing how they are responding to me today, I think it is going to be all right.

First, I explained what I thought of the duel with Lee Hyung-jin.

“I saw you when you were dodging my attack. Your eyes strained

wide open.”

“Yes. You told me I should look carefully at the attack and dodge it. That’s why.”

Ah, you did it because you were listening to my advice?

“Um... That’s true, but it’s not easy to keep your eyes open when an attack comes. When you are moving quickly like yesterday, there is the wind coming at your eyes. Also, when the attack is coming closer to your face, we tend to close our eyes instinctively.”

“Yes. That’s true.”

“It looked like you were forcing yourself to keep the eyes open. You could see the front of your eyes by keeping them open like that, but you can’t make sense of all information you need in such a short period of time. Even when your eyes are wide open, you end up making your field of view smaller to the size of a rice grain.”

“In that case... What should I do?”

“You need to be able to keep your eyes open naturally when the attack comes. It will not do you much good if you are forcing them. Now, like this.”

Out of the blue, I swung my fist to the front of Lee Hyung-jin’s face.

Surprised, he stepped back.

Of course, He closed his eyes.

“You need to be able to keep your eyes open even in situations like this. To do this... I guess the only way is to just get used to it.”

Honestly, the problem with Lee Hyung-jin was that he was a scaredy-cat.

Still, if he didn't even resolve a basic problem like securing a field of view at all times, he probably could not have reached the Fourth Floor in Hell Difficulty.

Also, he probably would not have been able to win four times against other challengers either.

Others would not have hesitated to challenge him either.

Lee Hyung-jin is very evasive and fast. Because of his traits, he wasn't exposed to many actual hits by the opponents so far. He was still afraid of getting beat up and wasn't used to it.

Because of this, when facing an attack that appears to be hard to dodge, he shrivels.

The problem only occurred because he got scared of my attack and

shriveled more than he should have.

“Getting used to them?”

“If this was not Tutorial, I could have trained you by getting one of those baseball batting practice machines. Otherwise, sparring against me for a week would lead to a big improvement. You are in middle of the Fourth Floor, right?”

“Yes, Big Bro.”

“In that case, go try getting beat up a lot by the goblins. Don’t dodge them. Try fighting them as you get hit. As you get used to getting hit, your eyes won’t close as much from getting scared or surprised.”

Lee Hyung-jin looked like he was about to die. He whined.

“Big Brrooooo... Do you have a different way that doesn’t involve getting hit?”

“No. Just do as I said. Toughen up and gain endurance while you’re at it too.”

“Ugh...”

I also gave him my opinion about his moves and decisions. I started to tell the other challengers about all sorts of things.

“Like this? Dodge it like this?”

A girl was breaking sweats demonstrating her dodges. Watching her made me hopeless about her future.

Her name is Oh Hye-jin.

She was a new challenger who came into the Hell Difficulty during the last round.

She didn't even manage to get past the first trial. No, she didn't even try.

During the challenger's first round, water and meat jerkies were given for free.

“No, what I'm saying is... When the arrow comes at your right shoulder, then what is the best way to dodge it?”

“Like this!”

She dove to her left side by throwing her body.

What the hell are you doing, seriously...

It seemed she thought of the most certain way to dodge it because

I asked for the best way to do it.

“No... Instead, since you know the arrow is coming toward your right shoulder, dodge the arrow with minimal movement. That is the best way. Think about it. That will allow you to maintain a stable stance, don't you think?”

“Yes, right.”

“You should maintain stable stance so you can dodge the next arrow. Right?”

“Pardon? But the next arrow is... Ah, yes. I see.”

I know. Once you dodge the arrow, there won't be a second attack coming.

You are right.

Still, you can't just be defenseless after dodging the first arrow. You need to be ready to dodge the next attack. You need to get completely used to it.

Not all of the traps in the First Floor have perfect answers.

Some traps have no patterns.

I realized that they had completely different perspectives from me.

When it came to passing the traps, I thought of it only as a process for my growth.

However, their goals were just surviving.

It cannot be helped that they were not as interested in growth as I was.

They obtained information about traps' order and dodged the arrows by following the information.

They lacked the ability to think independently and disliked practicing for the sake of their growths.

They were only focused on knowing the order of the traps and dodging the arrows they expected based on the information. People who acted this way died when they slipped up and decided or responded too late.

It was not like I could not understand them.

Not everyone could be like me.

Actually, it would be odd if there was someone who was.

With their lives at stake, who would choose to challenge the stage again from the beginning? Who would intentionally harm themselves just to raise their skill levels?

Also, unlike other difficulties where people had an obtainable goal like reaching the residential district at the 30th Floor, people didn't even have hope like that here in the Hell Difficulty.

Even I still had long ways to go.

To others, it probably made more sense to hold out at the First Floor using the little bits of points they obtained and the support points sent by the Order to buy food while holding onto a desperate hope that the situation might improve someday.

I could understand them.

*

[Tournament, Day 2, 07:40]

It was about time for the tournament, so we all headed to the entrance together.

As we walked, I asked Lee Hyung-jin,

“Are you going to enter the group round?”

“No. Who would I team up with?”

“Why don’t you team up with the other Hell Difficulty challengers?”

“Pardon?”

Lee Hyung-jin looked surprised. He said in low voice,

“Won’t that be hard? They’ve never experienced real combat.”

“Still, it could be a good experience. Try to at least get through the preliminary. As for the main matches, try to think of them as a learning experiences and challenge them. Pick your opponents carefully.”

“Um... Would that be all right?”

It’s all right.

You guys won’t stand any chance during the main matches, but the Order of Vigilance forbade use of excessive force during the tournament, so it is possible for you guys to enter for the sake of gaining experience.

“Try it. I am not saying you should just because you could enter the group round. Even if it is just for the sake of the Sixth Floor, you need to strengthen the others no matter what.”

“The Sixth Floor?”

“That’s right. From the Sixth Floor and on, it is not going to be just dangerous like how things are now. The difficulty will escalate to the point where it will appear to be impossible. I thought it might have been impossible to clear it by myself. It was that difficult. If you want to advance further, you need to have them rise up too and join you for party play.”

I had told him about the party play at the Sixth Floor before, so Lee Hyung-jin understood easily.

“Also, don’t you think you should help them become stronger? You can’t just let them stay at the First Floor forever.”

“Yes. I’ll try talking to them.”

We arrived at the entrance soon.

Lee Hyung-jin gathered up the other Hell Difficulty challengers and started to discuss the tournament with them.

I watched them. There were sense of excitement and anxiety along with Lee Hyung-jin who was trying to convince them.

I got to the colosseum's entrance.

[Will you participate in the tournament?]

[Individuals] [Day 1] [Complete]

[Group] [Day 2]

“I’ll participate in the group round.”

As soon as I said that, the party selection window showed up.

[List of parties you can join (5/14)]

[You can also create a new party.]

I would have made a new one for myself if I was going to enter the tournament alone. However, I already decided to enter it with Park Jung-ah, Kim Min-hyuk and others.

I came a little late because I was giving advice to other Hell Difficulty challengers. Kim Min-hyuk and others probably had made a party already.

I checked the list.

[Party Captain: Park Jung-ah]

[Party members: Lee Yuu-jung, Kim Min-hyuk, Lee Gi-jun]

[Would you like to join?]

“Yes.”

[The party’s captain is deciding on your request.]

[You joined the party.]

[You will be moved to the arena.]

“You are late.”

“Yeah. I had something I had to do.”

Park Jung-ah, Lee Yuu-jung, Kim Min-hyuk, and Lee Gi-jun were inside the arena.

The tournament had not begun yet.

[Tournament, Day 2, 07:45]

We still had 15 minutes until the preliminaries began.

Looks like I could have came a bit later.

“Hey. This is Ms. Lee Yuu-jung. You met her last time, right?”

“Ah, how do you do?”

She had a panicked expression just like our first meeting. However, she greeted me more naturally this time.

I think people are not as scared of me today for some reason.

Is it just my mood?

As for Lee Gi-jun, the other party member, I knew him already.

During the first day of the great harmony, he was one of the first rankers that I contacted along with Kim Min-hyuk.

Currently, Lee Gi-jun was at the 30th Floor along with Kim Min-hyuk and handling the Order of Vigilance's work.

“They actually did gather just the managers from the Order.”

“Well, yeah.”

The four were all residing at the residential area. Instead of clearing the Tutorial, they were all focused on the Order's work.

People who didn't know much about the Order's business also believed Park Jung-ah and Lee Yuu-jung usually focused on the Order's work instead.

In fact, although Park Jung-ah had been working hard on clearing the Tutorial because of her position as the Commander of the Order, still, she was more focused on the Order's business than clearing the Tutorial.

So, her image to the outside was as described above.

Looks like these guys are hell-bent on appearing to be pushovers.

“Um.”

Anyway...

Now that I'm facing Park Jung-ah again, I feel awkward.

When I got up, I wanted to talk to Park Jung-ah about a myriad of topics.

However, now that I'm facing her, I cannot think of anything to say.

My eyes met with Park Jung-ah's.

It was coincidence. No, it was not coincidence.

We were consciously minding each other's presence.

Anyway, it seemed Park Jung-ah was embarrassed. She glanced away.

"What is this? Hey, what's going on? What with this foul mood?"

Embarrassed, Park Jung-ah was going to say something, but she just looked at me and smiled.

She looked so adorable, so I smiled back.

We both always had emotionless and gloomy looks on our faces. Today, we were both smiling brightly, and it was great to see that.

We had seen Park Jung-ah smile yesterday on the drinking table. However, she was smiling out in the open in middle of the bright daylight. There was a different kind of beauty in her smile under this setting.

“You crazy bunch.”

I ignored Kim Min-hyuk’s curses and walked next to Park Jung-ah.

“Do you have a wooden staff? A wooden staff?”

“No. What were you going to do with it if I did have one? That bastard probably won’t die even if you had a spear to stab it with.”

Chapter 89 - The Tournament (5)

[The group round's preliminary matches will start in two minutes.]

[Conditions of victory]

1. Survive
2. Defeat the enemies

[Conditions of defeat]

1. All challengers are outside the ring.
2. All challengers declare an intent to surrender.

The monster for the preliminary round was summoned above the ring.

This time, it was not from the Hell Difficulty.

It was about three meters tall with a gigantic head.

Its head is huge. I think the head makes up a quarter of his total height.

I bet this one has a hard time putting on clothes.

Fortunately for the monster, it was not wearing any clothes.

Actually, there is nothing fortunate about it.

A hideous monster's nude fashion show is hazardous for eye health.

“What should we do? Should I go finish it quickly?”

Kim Min-hyuk shook his head and said,

“No. It would be best if you hide your strength. Sit this one out. We can handle something like this.”

“I got it.”

Kim Min-hyuk started coordinating with the rest of the group.

Although they didn't plan for this, it seemed like they were going to fight this with a team formation.

[The preliminary will start in one minute.]

Although I decided to step back and just watch, I was not worried in particular.

Although Kim Min-hyuk and Lee Gi-jun had been staying at the residential area on the 30th Floor, it was just for the sake of Order's work. They were rankers who proved to be of high caliber since the beginning.

They reached the 30th Floor before anyone else. Uniquely enough, they both wielded spears.

Although they were Easy Difficulty challengers, Park Jung-an and Lee Yuu-jung had reached the 42nd Floor. They were not particularly weak either.

As for Park Jung-ah, it was hard to measure her strength with just floor progression. She was far stronger than that.

She was the one who started using firearms as a main weapon. Of the firearm users, she was ranked the highest.

Recently, number of challengers who used firearms as their main weapon had increased.

In the community, they were commonly called a 'gunner' class.

Firearms had distinct advantages and drawbacks.

First, it was too expensive.

Both the firearms and the bullets were purchased at the store, and they were very pricy. Taking care of them was tricky as well.

To begin with, the firearms were not included in the list of starting weapons.

Because of this, it was difficult to grow skills related to wielding firearms from the start.

As for the advantages, simply...

It was powerful.

Its power was overwhelming in comparison to non-firearm weapons, so it made up for the lack of skills.

Also, the firearms purchased from the stores were made from magic and special ores and that had otherworldly powers unlike what existed in the outside world.

With enough support, a gunner could be recognized as the

strongest class.

Recently, there's been active research going on about rankers with enough points who specialize in distance combat.

Unlike other gunners who started later among the entrance floors, Park Jung-ah had been using the handgun since the First Floor because I gave her the gun.

Thanks to the support of early stage rankers who joined the Order recently, she didn't feel the burden of the expenses either.

Some in the community said Park Jung-ah's achievements were just a result of having overwhelming support and funds from the Order of Vigilance, and they criticized her. However, even I think Park Jung-ah has brilliant talent as a gunslinger.

Anyway, not everyone has the composure to shoot and kill someone after just one round in the Tutorial.

Moreover, she was quite the decent marksman.

She said she didn't have experience in wielding firearms before entering the Tutorial, she must be naturally talented at this.

As for Lee Yuu-jung... She brought out a huge shield from the inventory.

It was a gigantic tower shield. It encompassed her entire body.

Is she a shield warrior who doesn't even wield a weapon?

This is rare.

Actually, after getting used to a shield, one could use it to attack as well.

Also, the power of the shield attacks was definitely not weak.

However, few choose just the shield without any weapons in the beginning.

Most preferred a sharp weapon.

It could be used for protection, and that put people's mind at ease.

I guess she would make a good combo with Park Jung-ah who is a long-range fighter.

[The match will begin.]

Taaaang!

The match begun as the translucent wall that blocked the space between us and the monster dissipated. As soon as the wall disappeared, Park Jung-ah's gun breathed fire.

The monster's eye burst explosively.

I thought Lee Yuu-jung would play a defensive role. However, she dashed forward immediately.

From the start, the monster lost one of its eyes, and it couldn't get a grip of the situation. The monster was struck by Lee Yuu-jung's shield charge and fell onto their back.

Kim Min-hyuk and Lee Gi-jun, who were next to Lee Yuu-jung, stabbed the monster with their spears.

As expected, I don't need to worry about them at all.

Still, it feels awkward to just sit back and watch.

I don't think it would be right to act like I'm not interested. However, I'm too embarrassed to clap and cheer.

I brought out a slingshot round from the inventory and played catch with it as I watched the battle.

It was a heavy slingshot round made from metal.

Usually, it was used in conjunction with a sligh. However, I had been just throwing it at my enemies.

Using it that way was powerful enough.

‘If someone ends up in danger, I should save that person by throwing this at the monster.’

I thought about it as I watched the battle. However, the opportunity never came.

Um... I wonder if anyone would make a mistake soon.

I’m bored.

*

The battle dragged on longer than I thought.

There was a simple reason for this.

The monster’s ability to regenerate was beyond our wildest imagination.

The eye that got blown up in the beginning of the battle had completely reformed. Most of the wounds on its legs, arms and

body were closed.

It was probably going to be difficult to defeat this monster unless its head was blown up in a single blow or its heart was pierced.

At least its rate of recovery was slowing over time.

Its recovery ability had a limit. The match was testing the participants' ability to fight until the monster could no longer utilize its ability to recover.

It was perfect as a preliminary match opponent for the group round.

The monster's movements were not quick. It did not excel in its attacking power but its defensive abilities based on its ability to heal.

Anyway, its recovery rate is no joke.

If only my recovery rate could be that fast.

Ah, could it be that this bastard is a troll?

A troll never appeared in the Hell Difficulty, so I don't know how a troll looks like.

If this really is a troll, then I am a little disappointed.

The troll that I pictured in my mind all this time looked a little more ferocious and less stupid.

There was a time when my goal was to become a human troll. With that goal in mind, I used to work diligently on hurting myself, yet...

[Wuuuuurrrrrr-]

The troll running rampant and roaring.

Everyone is dodging well and continuing to deal damage to it.

As this continued, Kim Min-hyuk made a mistake with his steps and faltered for a moment.

He tripped over his own foot. That's just plain stupid.

Did his fighting sense fall from staying in the residential area too long?

Whatever. Finally, I have something to do.

After winding up my throw with all my might, I swung my arm and threw the slingshot round at the monster's shoulder.

Kwang!

Along with piercing sound, the slingshot round made direct impact with the monster. The monster's left arm and shoulder disappeared along with it.

Blood and flesh scattered into the air. The slingshot round went over the arena and flew to the stands.

Fortunately, it was blocked by the invisible barrier that separated the stands from the arena, so it didn't cause casualties.

There were screams from the stands, followed by sighs of relief.

That was fortunate.

It's been a while since I used slingshot rounds. I made a mistake in controlling my strength.

The monster fell down immediately. It was unable to move.

Its legs and arms twitched occasionally.

Actually, since it lost an arm, I should say its legs and arm twitched occasionally.

Anyway, it was foaming at its mouth. It unable to get up.

I looked carefully, and I saw that its heart area was crushed.

Surprised, Lee Gi-jun looked at me once. He approached the monster and stabbed it with the spear to end its last grasps at life.

As for Kim Min-hyuk...

With crumpled face, he turned to look at me and mouthed words.

‘Hey! I told you not do use your strength!’

You complain even though I saved you. Even though I saved you.

*

“Wasn’t that too much? How many times have I told you? Huh? I told you not to flaunt your strength needlessly. If you didn’t want to keep quiet, then you should have just said so. Why did you say, that you will stay quiet and then go back on your words? You did it at the individuals, and this time too? Huh?”

“I got it. Seriously. I am sorry! I saved you when you could have gotten hurt, but you are nagging.”

I ignored Kim Min-hyuk who was berating me from the side. I

plucked a handful of popcorn and stuffed it into my mouth.

It's delicious.

As I thought, popcorn is all about its salty taste.

The preliminary matches were not over for the group round.

The monster's specialty was its ability to recover, so the battle dragged on longer than I thought.

Ah, as a supplementary information, the monster was not called a troll.

It was called Akinicos or whatever. It was a monster with a strange name.

Park Jung-ah, Lee Yuu-jung and Lee Gi-jun said they had work to do and left. I was sitting with Kim Min-hyuk and watching the battles from the stands.

The people from the Hell Difficulty were fighting pretty well.

They were challengers of the first floor who had put everything in their abilities to dodge attacks, so they were not even thinking about attacking the monster. Instead, they were just dodging the monster's attacks.

I wondered if they would be able to slay the monster at this rate, but still, that counted as valuable experience.

This was different from the traps. They were facing the monster's deadly aura and dodging its attacks.

When the people get tired, Lee Hyung-jin will kill the monster.

Really, this monster is optimal for gaining combat experience.

I'm glad.

"Hey, were you not listening just now?"

"No, I was listening to you perfectly?"

"Ugh."

Kim Min-hyuk sighed deeply. He was quiet for a moment, but he suddenly reached for my popcorn and took a handful.

"It's tasty."

"I know, right?"

"Um. About Park Jung-ah, last night, did you guys..."

“Yep. It’s what you are thinking.”

“... Ugh. I wonder how I ended up setting up the bridge between you two.”

“What are you saying? It’s not like you did anything.”

“Do you know how worried I was because of the awkwardness between the two of you? Now that it is resolved, you guys took it to the next level.”

“Anyway, it is not awkward anymore. It worked out well.”

“... The two of you looking at each other and smiling like fools is not a proper picture. You know that, right?”

I put on a sour face and nodded.

That’s true.

The managers of the Order tried not to show human sides of themselves to the public.

When it comes to managing people, appearing to be super humans who lacked human emotions was better at reducing complaints even if it made a miniscule difference.

The image that Park Jung-ah had was a powerful charismatic person, with a machine-like composure and almost cruel degree of decisiveness. It was not the beautiful and bubbly personality of typical girl.

Should I act stiff toward her in public as much as I can?

Like secretly dating?

While I pondered about what to do, Kim Min-hyuk said out of the blue,

“Still, this is good.”

“What is?”

“Because of the happy look on the face.”

What’s this out of the blue?

“Ah, Jung-ah? Yeah, it is totally good. She just turned 20. She had so much burden on her shoulders until now. It’s great that we got to see her beam with laughter. It’s so great. Even if she is going to usually maintain a calm, business look, she should still know to smile like that when people are not looking. If she doesn’t, it wouldn’t be good for her mental health.”

I had once seriously worried about her mental health.

She was under tremendous stress and numerous restrictions. I feared that her mentality would rot away gradually and explode.

I guess she should be a little better now.

“No. I see about Park Jung-ah, but I’m talking about you. I was talking about you.”

“Huh? Me?”

“I saw you talking to the Hell Difficulty’s people earlier.”

“When did you see that?”

“There were people gathered at that empty field. I had to come and check it out.”

He picked up the drink socketed in the armrest. He quenched his thirst and continued.

“I wondered if the person I was seeing was really you. Um... How should I say this? You looked a little brighter. This was probably why they could ask you questions and talk with you comfortably.”

“Tell me a bit more in detail.”

I definitely felt like people were not scared of me today for some reason.

They greeted me. They even asked various questions.

I cannot just let this pass. He is saying I look different to people.

I started to think seriously about my mental condition and my attitude toward others while I went through the 13th Floor, so I have even more reasons not to let this pass.

“How should I explain it. You knew that you look super scary when you just sit with an emotionless look on your face, right?”

Um...

“Is that so?”

“Yes. You look angry as if you have a complaint. People aren’t afraid of approaching you for no reason. From standpoint with common sense, someone like you who possesses overwhelming power, will attract people like garbage to flies. But even such people are afraid of approaching you.”

“Since when?”

From experience, I knew that my public image was not very

good.

Still, it was not this bad.

“It was like this since they saw you for the first time at the very first day of the great harmony.”

During that time, I was under tremendous stress.

Around that time, I was just starting to get used to the pain. The goblins appeared, and I had to kill them. From doing so, I piled up a large amount of mental stress.

Meanwhile, the existence of the Representative Federation was slowly starting to scratch at my nerves.

Before then, I was spending the days at the Second Floor inflicting self-injuries. Before then, I had to accept the death of others who I met at the First Floor's waiting room.

I had to get away from the fear of the First Floor's traps and struggle for my survival somehow.

Before then... I had been drinking alcohol by the buckets. I was dying.

I was in a slump and quit professional gaming because of that. There was the thing about my father as well.

My image now was definitely different from how it was many years ago when I used to hang out with many people. This could not be helped.

“So, I was not like that earlier?”

“Yeah. It will be hard to explain in words. You have the same look on the face too. Still, you looked brighter than the usual. Your voice sounds more excited too. You’ve been like that the entire day.”

My mood is brighter? Could it happen without me noticing? I do think I look a little excited ever since the morning, but...

“You are still like that too. How should I say this, you look more comfortable? You look more human like now. You still look sharp and fierce as always, but regardless, you still look more human-like? In the past, you looked like people would get attacked just from approaching you carelessly.”

There is nothing bad about this.

The fact that my image looks brighter is a good thing.

It is a good thing, and I am thankful.

I lifted my head and looked around the stands to find Park Jung-

ah.

Chapter 90 - The Tournament (6)

“This is fun.”

“I know.”

I was sitting with my teammates and watching the game.

The preliminaries were over. The main matches begun at 12 pm.

Following Kim Min-hyuk’s strong recommendation, we decided to participate as late as possible.

It was going to take a few hours until the tournament cooled down, so I relaxed and watched the game.

The group tournament was fun to watch, in a different way than watching the individuals.

The teams who had superior teamwork continued to beat teams that just had strong individual challengers.

Watching the fight and seeing the people helping each other was quite fun.

The team from the Hell Difficulty also participated.

They challenged a team that was made of well-versed challengers of the Normal Difficulty. They did their best, but they were soundly defeated.

Their opponents were well aware of the obvious difference in strength, so their match concluded in friendly mood as they gave tips to the team from Hell Difficulty.

As I expected, it was good that I recommended them to participate in the group round.

I hope this will be the foundation for their development.

[Team captain Lee Myung-sun and the other four members achieved victory!]

[Will you challenge them?]

Lee Myung-sun was a pretty famous ranker in the Normal Difficulty.

The other party members were high rankers. Their team work was quite excellent as well.

According to Lee Yuu-jung, the five were the Order of Vigilance's Sixth Strike Division.

Their team work was obviously at a whole another dimension compared to other teams that were formed in the heat of the moment.

It looked like they were going to continue their winning streak unless they encounter an unexpectedly strong team.

I ate the nacho that Kim Min-hyuk bought as I thirstily anticipated the next challengers.

It's delicious.

He said that it was not purchased through the store. It was being sold by a challenger who made it himself.

Of course, the base ingredients had to be purchased through the store. However, considering the difference in the ingredient cost and the food's final price, this nacho had the potential for an incredible profit.

Kim Min-hyuk explained that the one selling the nachos made a contract with the Order. The one selling the nachos is making records of all dishes sold and plans to purchase items he wants from the Order based on the list.

The message about participation disappeared.

It seemed someone took on the challenge.

Who...

[Team captain Park Jong-shik and six others are stepping up.]

[The 11th match of the group round's main match will begin.]

[Team captain Lee Myung-sun and the four vs Team captain Park Jong-shik and the six]

The challenger team's captain was the Order's manager of the Hard Difficulty. Along with his entrance to the arena, Kim Min-hyuk, who was eating nachos, screamed as he crunched nachos in his mouth.

Uuuuuaaaaa!!

Ugh, that's disgusting.

“Ugh. Why do you guys go back on your words so easily...”

I also went back on my words, so I quietly looked away and pretended to be oblivious.

Park Jong-shik was not supposed to participate so early.

He was actually assigned to act as the responder in case any trouble popped up during the tournament.

Plus, Kim Min-hyuk thought it would be best if Park Jong-shik hid as much of his strength as possible.

Of course, he agreed to Kim Min-hyuk's recommendation just like I had.

Park Jong-shik didn't even glance at us at the stands. He was just strategizing with the team members.

Even though we are at quite distance, I can still see very well that the tip of his mouth was tilted up.

That Big Bro, he looks super excited about this.

I personally can understand his motives.

He doesn't want to be excluded from the festivities.

Moreover, the tournament was going smoothly. It was going better than the Order had expected. With this unexpected smoothness, there was not much for the responders to do.

There were almost no occurrences of emergencies like real fights between challengers.

“Hey. What do we do now?”

“I don’t know... Let’s just hope he will take it easy and come down. I’m going to go check if the responders’ manpower can be supplemented. I’ll be back in a bit.”

Disappointed, Kim Min-hyuk’s shoulders drooped down as he got up from his seats. He started to walk as he sent messages.

Unlike Kim Min-hyuk, who was upset about this, I was actually a little eager to see this match.

It was fun to watch battles between ordinary challengers. However, collisions between the strong ones was also intriguing.

Now that Park Jong-shik entered the scene, most of the ordinary challengers will give up on participating. From now on, only the strong teams who stand a chance against his team will participate.

It seemed that any other people shared similar views. From the stands, cheers broke into the intermittent noise.

Oh, I’m getting excited.

“Everyone who entered with Big Bro Jong-shik are from the Hard

Difficulty, right?”

I moved to where Kim Min-hyuk was sitting. I asked Park Jung-ah next to me.

“Yes. On top of that, they are all from the Order’s Strike Division.”

Park Jung-ah looked at Lee Yuu-jung who was sitting next to her. Lee Yuu-jung diligently introduced each members to us.

“That one is from Hard Difficulty’s 24th Floor. The one with blue shield is from 27th Floor. The two over there with the Captain Park Jong-shik, make up the main forces. Also, the young boy over there is still at 19th Floor, but he is blessed with luck and quite talented as well, so he is being actively supported by the support team. As for his specialty, he uses Blitz...”

Um? That kid. I think I met him once during the day of the great harmony.

“By any chance, do you remember his name?”

“Yes! It’s Lee Jun-suk.”

Ah, it is him. I asked Kim Min-hyuk to find someone with lightning magic so I could raise my magic resistance. It is that Blitz user.

During the day of the great harmony, I asked him for information about the 12th Floor's Stage in return for an accessory that improved his mana circuit skill.

So, he was quite highly rated.

Lee Yuu-jung continued her explanation about other participants.

It seemed she memorized all the information about every member of the Order.

She sure has great memory.

Her eyes were shining as she explained things. She was like a young, eager teacher who liked explaining things to others.

After hearing her explanations to the end, I learned two new things.

First, I could understand that this would more than frustrate Kim Min-hyuk.

Second, Park Jong-shik's party members were practically the all-stars of the Hard Difficulty.

[Party Captain Park Jong-shik and the six have achieved their 11th victory.]

Infuriated, Kim Min-hyuk's legs were shaking. He was glaring laser beams of fury at the back of Park Jong-shik's head.

However, Park Jong-shik never looked this way like he didn't give a damn about us.

Park Jong-shik's team's 11th victory made the crowd go wild.

At the tournament, there was no healing or recovery effects provided.

With passage of time, as they repeatedly fought in the, it was obvious that they were gradually being placed at a greater disadvantage.

However, his team crushed all 11 matches with perfect victories.

At first, when they won with overwhelming power, the audience looked a little disinterested. However, as they won three matches, then five matches, and when Park Jong-shik's team won ten matches, people shouted out his name and began cheering for his team.

This was no different from the gladiators at a colosseum.

Park Jong-shik frequently displayed showmanship to encourage applause and positivity from the crowd. I was sure this was one of the reasons for such heated reactions from the crowds.

Of course, Park Jong-shik never looked at our direction on the stands.

[There's three minutes left before the Party Captain Park Jong-shik and the six will win the entire tournament.]

Nobody was stepping up for the challenge.

It is no surprise. Who would challenge them now?

All strong teams who had confidence in their abilities to stand proudly against Park Jong-shik's team lost.

“Hey. Don't you think it is time for us to enter? I want to win the tournament at least.”

Kim Min-hyuk's head was lowered. He looked at me for a moment before starting to agonize about the situation.

“Um... Now that it came to this. Can we just let him win? There's

no need for you to enter too...”

Kim Min-hyuk was not liking the situation at all. He was trying to convince me against it regardless. However, his words were interrupted by Park Jong-shik’s powerful voice.

“HOO-JAEEEE!!”

Despite the colosseum’s humungous size, the voice echoed through the entire place like a lion’s roar.

“Aren’t you going to step up!”

The crowd exploded with shouting.

Wow... The response is unbelievable.

I could see why. When the mood is like a maelstrom that it is right now, then nothing would be more disappointing if the tournament because no challenger was willing to step up.

Instead of the tournament ending so prematurely, the crowds probably would want to see the greatest match up.

“I’ll enter.”

Park Jung-ah, who had been quietly watching the situation,

declared participation.

All team members, including myself, were moved to the arena.

Watching us entering the arena, the crowds' cheer became louder.

[Party Captain Park Jung-ah and the four will enter.]

[The 12th match will begin.]

[Party Captain Park Jong-shik and the six vs. Party Captain Park Jung-ah and the four.]

I can see the crowds' enthusiasm and anticipation and I can hear their cheers clearly.

This reminds of the days of the professional gaming again.

It is the sensation that I cannot forget even if I wanted to.

It's great.

Unlike myself, who was enjoying the situation, Kim Min-hyuk looked absolutely pissed. Park Jung-ah explained in detail,

“Now that it came to this, let’s focus on giving them entertainment. People will be very disappointed if the tournament ended now because nobody stepped up to challenge the team.”

Kuuuu. You are absolutely right.

Even Kim Min-hyuk had to agree with her. Of course, he didn’t forget to glare at Park Jong-shik with a fearsome gaze.

“Still, that’s within limit, do you understand? I won’t really help in the battle anyway. I’ll just get in the way, so I’ll stand back from the start.”

With that, Kim Min-hyuk left the arena.

Actually, in this battle between me and the Hard Difficulty’s highest ranked warriors, he was not going to be much help.

I could say the same about the other team members.

[Participant Kim Min-hyuk has left the arena.]

[Participant Lee Gi-jun has left the arena.]

[Participant Lee Yuu-jung has left the arena.]

“I signed us up for this... You will be all right?”

Before leaving the arena, Park Jung-ah asked. She looked concerned.

“Of course. It’s totally fine.”

“Well then. You must win.”

I nodded, and she walked toward the edge of the arena. Also, before she left, while maintaining her emotionless face, she winked at me.

[Participant Park Jung-ah has left the arena.]

Haha.

As I thought. She’s so adorable.

[Time left until the match begins: 30 seconds.]

Now, there were just myself and Park Jong-shik’s team.

Kim Min-hyuk is probably still hoping that I was going to hold back against him.

However, I was facing seven of the elite Hard Difficulty rankers.

Also, based on the matches so far, their team work is quite incredible.

The party member attributes' combination is well formed as well.

Against such opponents, I can't take it easy.

Also, I don't want to go easy on them.

They were fired up with will to fight. I can't afford to relax.

I was actually quite disappointed in the tournament so far.

The excitement felt great. It put a smile on my face.

Finally, I'm facing opponents who I can fight properly.

“Ho-jae. You won't disappoint me by taking it easy, right?”

Full of fighting spirit, he was provoking me. I let him hear my reply.

“I should be the one to say that, Big Bro Jong-shik. You won’t disappoint me, right? You must not fall so easily!”

[The battle will commence.]

The message signaling the start of the match appeared. Drowning in the cheering thunder of the crowds, I charged forward.

They were not far from me. Still, I accelerated quickly and received the acceleration effect from the Wind Spirit’s Blessing.

It was at that moment. There was someone who blocked my path.

The opponent was not wielding anything besides a dagger.

Watching the matches from the stands, I had obtained plenty of information about the team.

This one was a close-range fighter who focused on speed.

His ability to evade attacks was extraordinary. He didn’t deal heavy damage. He wasn’t able to take much damage either.

However, he provoked and drew the opponents' attention to scatter their gazes.

Looking at the dagger coming toward my neck, I used a skill.

[Battle Focus]

If this is a battle of speed, then it is a fight that I cannot lose.

This is especially true at the moment since I have the accelerator effect.

I struck the man's wrist with ease and smacked his jaw with my elbow.

It was a clean hit.

The man was faltering. I haphazardly pushed him away and resumed my charge forward.

A warrior with a blue shield blocked my path.

He was a shield warrior who was in charge of the front line.

At an instant, a wave of mana surged from the warrior. A sturdy layer was formed along the outside of his body and the shield.

I wanted to go around or jump over it if I could. However, it was going to be difficult because of my speed.

I took light steps and prepared for an attack.

[Iron Wall]

I slightly reduced my velocity and sent a reverse kick to the shield.

I didn't like this method of attack very much. However, I didn't have much choice since I wanted to strike up from below.

Kuuuung-

There was a blunt echo of collision. However, the warrior didn't get pushed by my attack. He was holding the stance.

Damn it.

I wasted that move. I thought it was simply going to make him sturdy. I was going to make him float up into the air, but it didn't work.

Does it also increase the weight?

Aiming for the moment, Park Jong-shik charged at me from the

side with his sword. I dodged it, grabbed his wrist and used Blink.

Kuuuung—

I made him collide with the shield warrior with resounding boom.

Having used the Blink so many times now, it was possible to utilize it like this.

The two were noisily clattering on the floor as they struggled to regain their stance. I ignored them and charged toward the opponent that I was aiming for from the start of the match.

Lee Jun-suk.

The long ranger who uses Blitz.

His attack power was incredible. Also, the Blitz attack caused substantial pain and paralysis. It was going to be tricky to handle.

As I approached Lee Jun-suk, powerful lightning surged from his body and spread around me.

Is it a skill that prevents the opponent from approaching him by discharging lightning into the surrounding?

Still, I can't let this opportunity to pass when I'm this close.

When it comes to difficult opponents, I had to finish them off even if it meant sustaining damage.

The lightning was striking my body. I could hear the zapping sound. However, I ignored it.

Do you have any idea how high my pain and paralysis resistances are!

I even have great magic resistance.

Watching me approaching while ignoring the lightning magic, Lee Jun-suk swung his arm in a futile attempt to try to stop me.

However, he was a long ranger. When it came to physical ability, he couldn't be all that strong no matter what.

I grabbed his arm and threw him to the outside of the arena.

Normally, against an opponent like him, I should be quickly striking him on the critical point to knock him out or kill him. However, since this was tournament, I chose to throw him off the arena.

All right. I eliminated the difficult one.

I didn't even have a moment to rest. A lancer was charging at me. I avoided his spear with ease and celebrated inside for the victory to come.

While I thought I'll be grasping the victory without any trouble at this rate, I could feel a strong flow of mana from behind me.

Park Jong-shik was focusing an incredible amount of mana at his right hand.

What the hell is that...

Is that a Kamehameha wave? Or is it Rasengan?

From the looks of it, it seemed to be an attack that required a windup time.

Let's handle this one first.

It seemed the preparation was over. Park Jong-shik released himself from the stance. He raised his right hand up.

The focused mana in his white hand was glowing white as he charged in, his palm facing me.

It is too fast.

Is it also affecting his physical performance?

The increase in his speed is excessively high.

That's got to be a Power Skill.

I need to use a Power Skill to fight this.

[Perseverance]

[Talaria's Wings]

[Sensory Widening]

Just before I collided with Park Jong-shik, I used Blink and moved to the left side of his back.

Perhaps because he had seen me use Blink several times, he didn't panic. He figured out where I was and turned to his left.

'You responded quickly, but this will be different from dealing attack to the front in the way you wanted.'

Let's decide the duel here.

I also focused mana at my right hand. I threw my fist and swung the Talaria's Wings.

Kwaaang~!

*

With nothing to do, I rolled around on the bed.

The tournament concluded last night.

Now, the only thing left was the free activities for the third day.

Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jong-shik left the tournament as soon as it ended. Because of the Order's work, they returned to the residential area and waiting room.

To explain in more detail, Park Jong-shik used work as the excuse and left the tournament first to avoid hearing nagging from Kim Min-hyuk. Kim Min-hyuk left afterwards to the residential area.

As for me, I had a meeting, so I decided to stay here until the lunch time.

“Inventory.”

[The mystery box for the winner of the first individual tournament.]

Explanation: The reward for the winner of the first individual tournament. It is unknown as to what could come out of the box. However, it will definitely help the winner.

[The mystery box for the winner of the first group tournament.]

Explanation: The reward for the winner of the first group tournament. It is unknown as to what could come out of the box. However, it will definitely help the winner.

I had two mystery boxes.

One was from the individual tournament. The other was from the group tournament.

Looking at the prizes made me think about the tournaments.

The individual matches were boring, but the group match was very satisfying, especially the fact that I won in the end. That made me feel even more satisfied.

Everyone was satisfied by the group tournament; not just the members of Park Jong-shik's team, but the crowds were pleased as well.

Kim Min-hyuk was probably the only one who was displeased with today's outcome.

Hahahahaha.

I brought out the mystery box and held it in my hands.

It was the size of a cube. It was black, perfect square block.

[Would you like to open it?]

I thought about it for a moment and put it back in the inventory.

I didn't need a new power right now.

Actually, I had many powers that I didn't know how to handle very well at the moment.

Let's open the box after asking Kiri Kiri.

I was getting bored. I was about to do skill training. At that moment, the knocks that I was waiting for resonated into the room.

Knock knock knock...

I panicked. To greet the guest, I got up.

I opened the door to greet Park Jung-ah. She was blushing a little.

“Were you waiting for a long time?”

I was.

I was waiting ever since the tournament ended last night. I was waiting through the entire night and the morning of the third day.

Still, I couldn't just tell her that I had been waiting long.

While I hesitated, Park Jung-ah apologized as she excused herself.

“I'm sorry I was late. The business I had to handle took longer than I thought. Were you asleep? I am not bothering you, am I?”

Bothering me? My heart is pounding from anticipation.

“Of course not. Actually, I was desperately waiting for you.”

Having heard what I said, she came close to me and smirked

lightly.

She whispered into my ear that she was sorry for making me wait.

As I thought, her smile is so attractive.

Park Jung-ah placed her arms around back of my neck. I picked her up by the waist and used my foot to close the door.

Chapter 91 - Tutorial 60th Floor (Part 9)

“I got it out!”

Using his three plump fingers, Yong Yong plucked out a wood block and shouted. Watching him made me smile automatically.

The clone bastard and Yong Yong were playing with Jenga.

Unlike how it was played with two people taking turns to pull out wood blocks. It was only Yong Yong was pulling the blocks out.

The clone bastard was taking on the role of meddling Yong Yong's attempts at getting the blocks out.

Actually, he was more focused on reading a novel. Anyway...

To Yong Yong and the clone bastard, Jenga was not some simple game for utilizing their focus and maintaining the center of weight of the Jenga tower.

It was a game for practicing the applications of magic.

This could be easily understood from how the clone bastard was using magic.

He wasn't just using telekinesis. He was also controlling gravity. He had been constantly changing the weight of the wood blocks.

He also had been adjusting the amount friction between the blocks. He wrapped the Jenga tower with a barrier that absorbed shocks from outside. On the wood blocks, he even applied strengthening magic on the wooden blocks.

Just to prevent Yong Yong's ability to interfere with magic... That bastard is even using dimensional spells?

Hey, isn't that a little underhanded? That's cheating.

[It's not a crime if one does not get caught.]

What's that now?

Are you the Nyarlathotep?

The clone bastard recited the famous line by the character and leisurely flipped the book's page.

Unlike the lax attitude he had, Yong Yong was really concentrated on the Jenga game.

He was endlessly circling the Jenga tower. He was observing the Jenga and using all magic spells he knew to try all sorts of things.

He beamed and looked overjoyed every time he succeeded in getting a block out.

However, it seemed the clone bastard was still too much to handle.

The differences in abilities were too great.

In fact, Yong Yong is quite skilled at magic.

There probably hasn't been a dragon in the history of dragons possessed his level of magic at his age.

This is all thanks to the early education.

I think it would be all right to have him try out Polymorph skill soon.

Yong Yong and clone bastard were playing just fine. I turned my gaze away from them and looked at the dimensional bag in my hands.

It was the bag that Lee Jun-suk gave me before he cleared the Tutorial and left.

It was possible to take things from the Tutorial when leaving. However, the amount that one could take with was restricted.

Moreover, items beyond a certain power and level were restricted regardless by the system, making them inaccessible by the outside

world.

So, the graduates who left the Tutorial occasionally gifted their belongings.

Usually, the belongings were gifted to the people they knew. However, there were also many cases where the belongings were auctioned off.

People who were rich in the real world purchased the maxed-out items from the graduates. Such people cleared the Tutorial quickly.

The graduates then received the reward for the sold items at the real world.

Of course, such cases were limited to the Easy Difficulty.

It was an even trade where both sides were happy with the end result.

The graduates got to sell the items which became useless to themselves for good money. As for the rich people, they were guaranteed safety through the Tutorial.

What was a rich person going to do by becoming an Awakened Warrior of rank B or above anyway?

It was going to be enough for such a person to just clear the Easy Difficulty and become an E rank Awakened Warrior with healthy body and long lifespan.

Looking at the bag, brought up some memories.

I had received gifts like these before a lot.

When I opened the bag, the first thing from the bag was his diary.

... You are a guy, dude. Why in the world did you send me your diary?

I opened the book and read it. It was closer to a record of his growth than a diary.

It was packed with memories from the beginning of the second round of the Tutorial, which is when he started, to when he left the Tutorial.

Um... I know this is obvious, but this rascal sure was amazing too.

Lee Jun-suk entered the Tutorial like me in its early days. Instead of learning from others, he had to research and master things himself.

The process was written in great detail.

For a caster who uses Blitz as his main skill, this record would be the greatest treasure in the world.

It would not be a waste for such person to give their entire fortune in exchange for the book.

Unfortunately, this book is not much of a use for me.

I put the record away in my inventory and checked out other things in the bag.

Robe, cape, staff, coat, shoes, all sorts of accessories and even precious orbs...

He sure sent me a huge collection.

On top of that, the items have incredible levels.

This rascal held the throne of the second strongest in Tutorial for almost ten years. Should I say it is as expected of the man of such caliber?

Actually, in fact, aren't these items are better than mine?

Although it is true that I didn't care much for getting best items,

this is hurting my pride a little.

I put the items away on the side.

I was thinking that I should give them to Yong Yong later.

What should I do with the rest that would be hard for Yong Yong to use?

As for the orbs, I can use them as materials for experiments.

Um... There are so many items that I am not sure about what to do with.

I had no reason to think hard about it. I opened the community.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I'm going to give away S rank items. First two people will get them.]

[Lee Gi-min, 32th Floor: Me!]

[Jung Ji-hyun, 41th Floor: Hand!]

[Lee Whee-sung, 3rd Floor: 1st Place~ Thank you so much. I'll use them well!]

[Park Jin, 14th Floor: Me!]

[Lee Whee-sung, 3rd Floor: What the... There weren't any replies before. I got pushed off while I was writing the message. TT TT]

Life is all about timing.

I need to give away items like this occasionally. People really like this.

As for the rest, I should send them to Park Jung-ah and donate it to the Order of Vigilance.

*

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: They are Lee Jun-suk's belongings? Of course I'll be grateful.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Well then. I'll place the items on the auction.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: I got it. Big Bro, by the way, how did you convince him? I know I am the one who asked you to try, but I honestly did not think he would leave so willingly.]

How? What do you mean how? It's me, after all.

First, I told him the reasons why he should go back to the outside world.

Of course, they were not all that important for him, so that didn't really convince him.

Instead, Lee Jun-suk asked me what my level was.

So, I told him the answer.

Afterwards, he agonized for a long time, and told me that he thought about it and decided to go back to the outside world.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: What's your level?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: 351]

Park Jung-ah didn't send a reply for a while.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Really?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Really.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: I find it amazing that levels over 300 even exist. What's this? How's this even possible? Does it make common sense? You went up by another 100 since the last time.]

My level is 351 because it is possible.

You shouldn't even try to compare me to other challengers.

Most challengers use the skills issued by the Tutorial's system and try to increase the skills' masteries.

Growing like that, they proceed with clearing stages and gaining more skills.

Meanwhile, they steadily gain experiences and levels. They also gain stats too.

After grinding 100 levels, they graduate from the Tutorial. As soon as they are freed from the influence of the Tutorial's system, their growth stops.

They may grow in experience and sense, but there are almost never any instances of anyone gaining something like skill levels afterward.

However, I'm different.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: How are you different? Hurry and explain.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Unlike others who think of skills as super powers that just dropped from the sky and use them as such, I understand the fundamentals and inner workings of the skills. I can use abilities without skills.]

Ever since I was stuck behind the wall called the 61st Floor, the path I chose in attempt to break through the wall was magic.

I was trying to obtain skills that would allow me to pierce through the floor.

For example, the sealed environment magic or clone production.

I was at the residential area. To obtain new skills, there was only one way. It was through studying magic and obtaining them without the help of the system.

Of course, such attempts all ended up in failures, but...

Like that, I increased my level in magic.

I had plenty of materials for my development.

Inside Tutorial, there were countless skills.

I dissected each of these skills. I discovered their inner workings and fundamentals.

Eventually, I learned new magic spells. I was able to create new spells and modify them.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Really... I can only say that this is incredible. By the way, how did you gain the experience points? You can get to level 300 from challenging the 61th Floor repeatedly?]

Of course not.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: There is a way.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Is it the kind that you cannot share?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: It is not like that. It is similar to increasing the stats through training. When one's strength is at 9, rigorously exercise to strengthen one's muscles will increase the stat to 10. You know this, right?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: But I never heard that level will increase too.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: It turns out it does happen when the height of one's abilities go beyond the level. For example, if someone who already possesses the power of a SS rank Awakened Warrior entered the Tutorial, then that person will probably start with level 55 instead of level 1. Roughly speaking, think of it like that.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: The height of one's abilities?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I suppose I could call it one's caliber.]

Once the person's true caliber far exceeds the given level, the level goes up by 50. There is no reward for the level up. It is literally a change in level only to correctly reflect the person's true caliber.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: I don't quite get it, but I understood well that it is not normally possible.]

You are actually right. It is more or less impossible.

It will take development a path like mine or something even harsher. Also, it will take cooperation from countless Gods.

In addition to excessive obsession and madness, it also demands over ten years of arduous training.

It is impossible.

*

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: An event?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Yes. Do you remember that there might be a new event soon? I told you that it definitely will not be a day of the great harmony.]

I do remember.

It's been a while though.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Didn't you say it was inaccurate information?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: It turned out to be correct. I heard the next tournament will happen.]

I think this will get bothersome.

I never expected another tournament to happen again at this time.

One special characteristic of the tournament was that the size of the tournament grew each time.

The most recent tournament was a super-size one that combined all servers.

That means, the next tournament's size will be at least...

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Are we going to be participating with servers of other dimensions?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Probably. That's our guess.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Any other information?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: There isn't any. The information about the next tournament is ridiculously expensive. It was so expensive that we doubted our informant. It will take some time before we can get proper information.]

The problem is when the tournament will happen.

I think I should prepare for this in advance.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Still, there are good things about the tournament, don't you think?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: What's good? Because we get to meet again after not being able to see each other for so long?]

[Hey, original bastard. When you are doing your dating stuff, can't you shut the emotional feedback?]

Clone bastard, who was doing Jenga with Yong Yong, complained in frustrated voice. However, I ignored him.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: T... That's nice too, but there is the mystery box as the prize for the winner.]

I am certain that the tournament will be problematic for me, but as Park Jung-ah said, there were good things too.

The mystery box, the prize for the tournament's winner, didn't have a preset content for the prize.

Depending on the user's abilities and the situation the user faced, the item that would be most useful for the user or the user's greatest desire would be gifted to them.

In that case, perhaps I could get an item that would be the clue to getting through the 61st Floor?

I have never heard of such an item, but it was possible.

I got a new goal.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Ah, I'm sorry, but please confirm the information for me. About setting privacy for a specific information, if it applies for the servers in other dimensions. Don't put this in the request list.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: ... I got it. I'll go find it as soon as I can.]

Park Jung-ah knew about my situation very well. As expected, she understood me quickly.

I expressed my gratitude to her and closed the messenger.

I raised my wrist and looked at the bracelets that were clanking

with each other.

They were safety measures to suppress my power.

First, I should make more of these.

Other people are not like Yong Yong or my clone bastard. They are very fragile.

I am going to be meeting other people. It has been a long while since I met other people. If I was forgetful about this, I could hurt others.

If my mana ran rampant, a large-scale disaster will happen too.

I think I should spend the days making the safety devices for a while.

I opened the inventory and checked the materials.

After that, I checked the points I had left.

There wasn't much material left to make enough safety devices.

It looks like I'll have to go to the 61st Floor again.

Chapter 92 - Tutorial 15th Floor

*

[You cleared 15th Floor of Tutorial in Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your wounds and abnormalities will be recovered.]

[You obtained 3000 points for clearing the stage.]

[You obtained 3000 points for the best clear.]

[Many gods are showing positive responses to you. You obtained 5300 points.]

[Many gods are showing negative responses to you. You lost 700 points.]

[Additional rewards are given based on the play record.]

[You acquired Night Vision Lv. 10]

[Night Vision Lv. 10 was combined with Night Vision Lv. 6]

[You acquired Night Vision Lv. 11]

I'm so glad to see the clear message.

Ugh. That took long.

The 15th Floor stage's clear condition was killing all the monsters of an abandoned mining cave.

The monsters were like moles. They turned the mine into a complicated network of pathways like an ant farm. It took over 14 days to hunt them all down.

To find the traces of monsters hiding in strange corners, I located hidden pathways. As I spent a lot of time crawling through narrow pathways, I wondered if I was going to develop claustrophobia.

I never knew that spending a long time at dark and narrow space could be this grueling.

No matter what I was doing, resting, sleeping or eating, the space was so small that I couldn't even stretch my arms up all the way. Having spent so long in such confined spaces, my arms, legs, feet and hands all felt incredibly stiff.

Unable to satisfy the desire to stretch out and be comfortable, I felt trapped, and I lashed out at the Tutorial frequently.

The clear difficulty itself was not tricky.

I now had Energy Sensory, and my ability to operate mana had developed another level as well. Hence, darkness was not a big hurdle to me.

However, I wondered if I should be training other senses besides the Energy Sensory, so I minimized the use of Energy Sensory and carried out the search for monsters by relying on other senses. This turned out to be a bad idea.

Of course, my efforts were not in vain.

I spent two weeks and tracked down monsters by focusing on just my vision and hearing. My skills on tracking, stealth, and other ones related to sensory leveled up a lot.

As a clear reward, the Night Vision skill's level increased as well.

As a bonus, I became very used to moving around while in prone.

It is just that... I never want to experience this stage ever again.

Let's hurry and go out to Kiri Kiri's field.

“Teleport.”

*

“Hello! Ah hahahahahat! Houjaeeee, you are completely dark! It’s a dark Houjae!”

I didn’t even get to feel the joy from moving to a open field before Kiri Kiri started to tease me about my experience.

First, I ignored her and focused on being thankful for the space.

There were fresh wind and warm sunlight.

More importantly, the field was wide and open. It was magnificent.

I stretched my arms and legs as I asked Kiri Kiri,

“Dark? I am?”

Kiri Kiri didn’t have a moment to spare to respond to my question because she was busy rolling on the ground and laughing out loud.

Bewildered, I looked at myself found out that even my armor had darkened into shades of dirt.

It seemed a lot of black stuff got on me because I spent so long grinding in the narrow cave.

“Kiri Kiri, you don’t like this?”

“Yea! I don’t like it! Ah hahahat. Dark Houjae!”

You sure are excited, totally excited.

I quietly opened the store and bought chocolate.

“It’s too bad. You don’t like dark stuff. You don’t like chocolate either then?”

“No, I like it!”

Of course you do.

Kiri Kiri immediately changed her words. I handed over the chocolate to her and brought out a small hand mirror from the inventory.

Kiri Kiri recommended that I buy this before I went up the Fourth Floor.

Now that I think about it, why did she tell me to buy this?

I never even used the mirror in clearing any stages.

Um... It means that it could have been a clue for clearing a stage, but I didn't utilize it.

This proves that Kiri Kiri's advices are not 100% necessarily useful.

I looked at myself in the mirror. I do look dark.

It looks as if I intentionally put on makeup on my face. There is not even a single spot of light skin anywhere. My entire face is covered in a layer of dirt.

I can see why Kiri Kiri was laughing.

The chocolate I gave to Kiri Kiri was 98% Cacao, so it was incredibly bitter. Having tasted it, Kiri Kiri was cringing and on the verge of tears. I glanced at her and peeked a smile.

Kiri Kiri looked like an innocent child who experienced the evils of the world for the first time. She looked that shocked. Kiri Kiri looked at me.

I opened the inventory to bring out a towel and water bucket. I wiped the black layer from my face.

It is not coming off easily.

It took a long time just to get it off from my lips and eyes.

Let's wipe off the rest later. It's such a bother.

I looked at Kiri Kiri. She was shedding desperately thick, chicken-shit-like tears. She was crying like a small child whose toy was taken, yet she was chipping away at the dark chocolate.

I was dumbfounded. I took the dark chocolate from Kiri Kiri.

What the... If it tastes so bad that you are going to cry, then don't eat it. Just throw it away.

You are making me feel sorry that I gave it to you. Why are you eating while crying?

"Hiiing. Don't take it from me.. Hiiing."

Note: "Hing" is a kind of sound made when Koreans want to express stressful, annoying, or depressing emotion.

Even though she looked desperately sad, Kiri Kiri was not able to give up on the snack. I felt terrible for some unexplainable reason.

Could it be that a ghost who never tasted sweet treats got attached to you?

I bought a sweet milk chocolate from the store and handed it to Kiri Kiri.

*

“You don’t have anything you think would be worth telling me about the next stage?”

Kiri Kiri was holding the dark chocolate in one hand and the milk chocolate in the other.

“That’s right. I got nothing.”

I figured as much.

Ever since I cleared all floors that were supposed to required party play, Kiri Kiri had not been giving me any solid information about clearing the next stages.

If I asked specifically, then she did tell me things. However, she usually didn’t tell me anything because she judged that I didn’t need it.

What was I was going to ask?

First, there are the questions about God, mana and the tournament, which are the things I am always curious about.

Information about them are incredibly expensive, so I need to collect more allowances.

Other than those...

“Ah, Kiri Kiri. I was thinking about switching to a different weapon.”

“Weapon?”

“Yes. I really need a better and sturdier weapon.”

I seriously do.

Recently, I had been really feeling the need for new weapons.

The weapons and armors I currently use: the shield, gladius and backsword, were purchased right after clearing the Fourth Floor.

I had been using the same weapons and armors since then.

Ever since I gained the ability to layer the weapon with mana, I didn't exactly need to find a good weapon. However, I kept contemplating about the lacking performance of the weapons compared to my level.

The weapons looked like they were going to break if I weakened the mana layering on them even by a little bit. Compared to my power, the weapons I had were too light and weak.

If it were not for the fact that the weapons were repaired automatically when I entered the waiting room, the weapons would have become junk a long time ago.

As for the shield, it would have been pierced by arrows that appeared at the First or Second Floors.

Regardless, I developed skills on minimizing impacts because of this, so the shield helped me, but...

“You should change them. Actually, you should have changed them sooner. Wait.”

Kiri Kiri pondered about something for a moment and proposed her idea.

“How about opening the Mystery Box?”

“The Mystery Box? You mean the box I won from the tournament?”

“Yea!”

I opened the inventory and brought out a box.

[The mystery box for the winner of the first individual

tournament.]

Explanation: The reward for the winner of the first individual tournament. It is unknown as to what could come out of the box. However, it will definitely help the winner.

It was an item that I received as the winning prize from the tournament.

Because I won both the individual and group tournaments, I had two Mystery Boxes.

I had asked Kiri Kiri about the box when I cleared the 14th Floor, but she only gave me information similar to the box's description. She said that I should open it later when I have something I need.

“Honestly, opening the box for a weapon is a little... I don't feel comfortable with that. It is possible that some random, unfitting weapon that I had never used before could come out.”

“No. The statement about the resulting item being unknown does not mean the item will be random. It is stated that way because the needs of the user change constantly.”

What I need changes constantly.

I am not sure about that. I can think of something I would need regardless of when.

For instance, let's say a total cheat item that raises all stats by 50 each came out.

Such an item would be useful for anyone regardless of the person's level.

So, the item that could come out of the box is not going to be the best and greatest item that I need.

It would be better to say that it will be the best item I will need at a moment.

For example, items that are a little better than the ones I could purchase through the store.

Perhaps the item from the box will be something like that?

In that case, I understand why Kiri Kiri said I should open it later.

“All right. I'll open it.”

[Would you like to open it?]

Yes.

[The Mystery Box you won from the first tournament's individual round is disappearing.]

[You obtained the Transmutable Thousand Arms of Kangtus]

An item with a strange name popped out.

I stared at Kiri Kiri. She avoided my gaze and bit on to chocolate.

Let's check the item.

It won't be too late to take the chocolate from Kiri Kiri later.

The item was a black sphere.

It was very sturdy and heavy.

[Transmutable Thousand Arms of Kangtus]

It is the weapon used by Kangtus, the weapon master.

It has a thousand different forms.

There is a limit on its size and weight.

The weapon was created by a nameless gold dragon of a high rank.

Nothing is known about the inner workings of the weapon or its composition.

Kangtus, the owner of the weapon, lived for over long 300 years, so there was a rumor about him being half-human and half-dragon.

It was a great item.

First, it stated the weapon was made by a dragon.

That means that I hit the jackpot.

I don't know about the weapon's performance yet, but the fact that I can change its form at will has a huge merit.

I had been using short dagger, spear and long sword. The weapon's transmutability was sweet.

It means I could have three different weapons with just this one item instead of buying three different weapons.

Let's test it out.

The Transmutable Arms was the size of a volleyball. I placed it on top of my hand and visualized the shape of a weapon.

Nothing happened.

I injected mana into the weapon and tried to visualize a weapon again. This time, the weapon wobbled and changed its shape into a gladius.

I injected it with mana again and tried to change it to a long sword.

The long sword was black, and it had a simple design.

It looked a little different from the backsword. However, it didn't feel awkward when I tried swinging it.

The weapon's ability to change forms is quick.

It didn't even take five seconds.

If it is this fast, I think I could even shift the weapon's shape in middle of a battle to surprise my enemies.

Also, the weapon's weight and durability are substantial as well.

As for the weight, it seemed to remain consistent regardless of the weapon shape.

The weapon's weight was heavy enough to be a drawback. However, considering my current muscular strength, heavier weapons are more effective.

I think the weapon is more durable than the other weapons I had been using.

More importantly, this weapon is handling my mana very well.

Layering a weapon with mana is quite difficult.

When I trained in this art at the Fourth Floor, it took two rounds. I continued the training, barely eating or sleeping.

Because the technique was so tricky, it was still somewhat difficult for me to layer a weapon with mana.

However, this Transmutable Arms handled the mana so efficiently.

Yep. Jackpot. Supersized Jackpot.

After getting a jackpot from one box, I became greedy.

What would happen if I opened the other box?

Are they going to give me another Transmutable Arms?

Even if it is not that, if it is another item on par with the Transmutable Arms, I'll welcome it no matter what.

Let's crack open another one. I should do this when I'm lucky.

[Would you like to open it?]

Yes.

[The Mystery Box you won from the first tournament's group round is disappearing.]

[Transmutable Thousand Arms of Kangtus]

It is the weapon used by Kangtus, the weapon master.

It has thousand different forms.

There is a limit on its size and weight.

The weapon was created by a nameless, high rank gold dragon.

Nothing is known about the inner workings of the weapon or its composition.

Kangtus, the owner of the weapon, lived long for over 300 years, so there was a rumor about him being half human and half dragon.

Jackpot...

Another one really did come out.

It would be perfect to use one for the shield on one hand the other one as the weapon on the other hand.

I can also shift the shape of the shield at will into various forms. I could even wield weapons with both hands.

It seemed that the Transmutable Thousand Arms could not change to a form that is not predetermined. However, since there are thousand different forms, this is enough.

“Kiri Kiri.”

“Yep, yep! Yep!”

Eyes sparkling, Kiri Kiri looked at me.

Based on the past experience, it seemed she knew what my next line was going to be.

“What kind of cake would you like me to buy for you?”

“Ice cream cake!”

*

While Kiri Kiri was rushing at the ice-cream cake, I decided to check out the community forums.

There wasn't any new information there.

Lately, useful information went to the Order of Vigilance first, so I didn't end up getting new information from community as often as before.

My main goal in visiting the community was just watching people playing with each other.

Lately, the hottest topic was guessing who would become the first one to clear the Tutorial.

If it was like before, people would have picked Lee Chan-yong, the one at the highest floor.

However, the public's opinion had slightly shifted.

It had been many rounds since Lee Chan-yong got stuck on the 89th Floor. He was unable to clear the stage.

Has it been five or six rounds?

On top of this, the situation was that he couldn't even make an estimate on when he would clear it.

It seemed Lee Chan-yong had become lethargic because he was stuck behind a wall.

He was a challenger who had put his life on the line to focus on clearing the Tutorial.

Because of his determination, he was able to clear through the floors faster than everyone else, and became the challenger at the highest floor. However, his rapid progress had come back to hurt him as a poison.

Unlike me, he didn't care about growth at all.

He merely focused on clearing the stage faster and faster.

Even when he had opportunity for growth, he chose to clear the stages faster, even if it was just a day or an hour sooner.

Honestly, the choices he made were stupid.

Plus, the Order had been sending him items and information to support him, so he progressed through the stages more rapidly.

Back then, it looked like Lee Chan-yong was going to be able to leave the Tutorial in a few short rounds. Now that he was facing a stage that truly tested his abilities, he had no choice but to stop his march to the top.

I thought about how he looked when I saw him at the tournament.

In the past, he obsessively charged toward the goal he set for himself. Now, he was lacking in drive, and he looked empty.

If it was like before, he would not even have come to the tournament.

He was not interested in it.

Recently, Park Min, a challenger in Easy Difficulty at 83th Floor, was being discussed as the possible first challenger to clear the Tutorial.

He was slower than Lee Chan-yong. However, he had been forging his abilities as he progressed through the floors. Also, he made it to 83th Floor despite not having received any support from the Order. He was a challenger who made it to where he was on his own.

Even the people inside the Order sometimes talked about if the Order should support Park Min instead.

I suddenly wondered what Kim Min-hyuk's thoughts were on this matter.

He was aware of this problem.

He was the type of man who always recognized problems well before they became apparent in the community, and he had been preparing for them.

Should I contact him?

I was about to send him a message, but I turned off the message window.

Since I'm going to ask, I'm going to ask Park Jung-ah.

Keeping that thought in mind, I started to write a message to her.



[God of Adventure is smiling while watching you.]

... That god...

Since the tournament, the God of Adventure had been showing such responses whenever I thought about Park Jung-ah or communicated with her through the messages.

The God of Adventure was acting like an uncle who was more than happy to watch the nieces and nephews play. It was quite unpleasant.

Especially when I think about what happened during the night with Park Jung-ah...

[God of Adventure is excited in anticipation.]

[God of Adventure is eagerly watching you.]

[God of Slowness is smacking the back of someone.]

Because of such responses, now I'm past being a little annoyed. It is awkward.

Pervert...

God of Adventure is always watching me.

Honestly, I never tried to hide anything, and I never let it bother me. I thought they could go ahead and watch if they wanted.

However, thinking about the fact that they were watching what I was doing with Park Jung-ah too...

[God of Adventure is blushing out of embarrassment.]

Ugh... That voyeurism patient...

Chapter 93 - Tutorial 16th Floor

[God of Nature?]

[Yes! The Trial of Apostle started, and I obtained a new Power Skill.]

[Is that so? Um...]

[Is there a problem?]

[No. It's not like that. It's just that I don't get along with the God of Nature.]

*

I left Kiri Kiri's field and entered the 16th Floor's waiting room. As soon as I got there, I tested out the performance of the Transmutable Thousand Arms.

It was definitely more durable than the equipment I had before.

I could feel its heavy weight as well.

After doing a light performance test, I checked out its various forms.

It would be hard to utilize all thousand forms in battle.

I will probably end up using a few forms most of the time. Depending on the situations, I might select a few more.

I thought about the long sword that I formed at Kiri Kiri's field, and the weapon immediately changed to the long sword.

Once I had formed the weapon before, it seemed the weapon was going to change shape even if the idea just casually passed through my mind.

Of course, I needed to inject it with a little bit of mana.

It even has a favorite mark function. It's the best.

First, I looked for a shield form.

I was concerned about the possibility that the Transmutable Arms didn't possess a shield form. Fortunately, it included various shield forms.

I found two forms that I decided to use as my main shields.

First one was a relatively small round shield.

I was most used to this shape.

The second one was an inverted triangle-shaped shield.

Its corners were protruding noticeably. I think the corners will be useful for striking down the enemies.

It doesn't look like it was used by a human being.

The shield had the design that made me think of history books or video games.

Actually, because the Transmutable Arms is so heavy, ordinary humans would not even be able to lift or swing it.

I should just think that the weapon itself was never meant to be used by a human.

... No. The description of the weapon said Kangtus, the owner of the weapon, was rumored to be half-human and half-dragon.

It means he definitely was a human being.

Does that mean he is from another world?

Another dimension, another planet? Perhaps that's what it is.

I wish I could ask Kiri Kiri about these, but this kind of

information is extremely expensive.

Once, I tried to find information about Idy before realizing how expensive it was.

I thought information about the Gods were actually cheaper.

I set distracting thoughts aside and focused on testing the weapon again.

Now that I have a shield, next is the weapon.

I tried out the gladius form first.

I was most familiar with this.

It formed a powerful combination with the shield, and the weapon fit me well, so I probably won't be throwing away this combination any time soon.

There were many other short swords that matched the form of Gladius.

There were minor differences in width, length, and handle. Some just had different decorative designs.

I think there are over ten short swords with similar shapes.

Of them all, I picked the one that had similar length to the Gladius I used to use. This one didn't have much decoration. I committed the sword's shape to my memory.

Next, I tried forming long swords and straight swords.

The long sword was for swinging with the shield.

It was closer to the kind of sword that was used on horseback. It was similar to the backsword I had been using.

As for the straight sword, I made it although I didn't really have a specific use for it.

I didn't feel that I needed one, but because straight swords usually looked really cool I decided to remember memorize one form.

Next was the spear.

I learned spear techniques from Idy. Plus, it formed a powerful combination with a shield.

First, I tried forming the most basic shape.

It was straight, and it wasn't decorated with anything.

Because of the unique metallic nature of the Transmutable Weapon, the entire spear was made of metal. Because of this, the spear didn't bend. Also, it was quite heavy.

The weight of the weapon was constant, but because spear was longer than a short weapon like Gladius, it felt heavier.

Of course, with my strength, I could handle it with ease in one hand.

The next form I discovered was a halberd.

I found many forms with large edges while I was checking them out.

It had an axe-like edge for swinging and a spear tip for thrusting. It even had a hook for grabbing the opponent. The halberd had various methods of attack.

I was sure it would take me some time to get used to the halberd. Still, I liked that it looked cool.

The last form I found was a blunt weapon.

Throughout stages, there were a few occasions where I needed such a weapon.

Blunt weapons were highly effective against sturdy armor or monsters with strong bones.

In particular, when I fought skeletal soldiers at the Sixth Floor, I regretted not having a blunt weapon and even wished to restart the Tutorial with a blunt weapon.

Since the Sixth Floor, I had been clearing the later floors with ease, so I didn't feel a strong need for weapon upgrades. I had been postponing the plan of finding myself a blunt weapon, but I finally got one now.

I memorized another two forms, a mace shape and a hammer shape.

I practiced swinging various weapons before checking the time. Just in time for a meal.

[Round 17, Day 17, 08:10]

It's time for me to go to the Stage.

It won't be too late for me to master the weapons as I clear the stage.

I ate a simple meal with muffins and milk as I watched the community.

There wasn't much there.

Should I message to someone?

I already sent a message to Park Jung-ah. Besides,, it was her busy hour. I'll just get in her way if I contact her at this time.

I should contact her again later.

[God of Adventure is proud of your decision.]

... I'm very close to getting annoyed.

Please show some restraint in watching me, you old man.

I thought about an old man who was heavily panting with blushing face. That was giving me the creeps.

There was no proof that the God of Adventure was an old man.

[God of Adventure was seriously hurt by your words.]

[God of Adventure is pissed.]

I don't care.

It is not like this is the first time that the God of Adventure got pissed at me.

Ah, since God of Adventure is pissed, maybe he won't watch me as much? That's actually better.

[God of Adventure is very disappointed.]

[God of Adventure is very disappointed.]

[God of Adventure is very disappointed.]

Oh my... It looks like he isn't going to stop watching me just because he is pissed.

I ate the muffin as I thought about God of Adventure, and then I contacted Lee Hyung-jin.

There was no reply.

He said he entered the Fourth Floor's boss room recently. He was probably busy.

The boss room at the Fourth Floor is pretty tough. I wonder if he will do well there.

Of course, considering the theme's special characteristic, as long as he is hell bent on remaining hidden, I won't have to worry about him dying in that boss room.

I fed the rest of the muffin into my mouth and got up.

I wiped my hand on my waist and got on the portal.

I went past a familiar looking bonfire room and used the portal that led to the stage.

[Welcome to the 16th Floor's stage.]

Kwang! Kwang~!

As soon as I entered the stage, violent sounds echoed into the air and the ground shook wildly.

I instinctively lowered my body and maintained balance.

It's dark in here.

I spread mana to check the surrounding area.

It's a sealed space.

Just now, when the ground shook with loud noise, I think the ceiling collapsed and blocked the exit.

The walls, ceiling and floor are all made of stones.

Am I trapped in here?

There were five other people in this space.

To figure out their appearances in greater detail, I was about to spread more mana. However, a long message appeared.

[The 16th Floor's Trial will begin.]

Description: Ten years ago, at the west of the Urphan Continent, a nameless dungeon was discovered. Since then, countless adventurers have come to the dungeon.

At the dungeon, some found precious stones, rare mana herbs, disabilities and even death.

Those were daily routine in this dungeon.

Two years ago, holy temples throughout the continent all received the same divine message.

The message said there is a precious treasure lying dormant in the dungeon at the west of the Urphan Continent.

Fueled by greed, numerous forces sought the treasure and sent exploration squads.

Holy knights of a holy temple, adventurers and mercenaries of a guild, knights of a kingdom and mages of a magic tower gathered for the dungeon's treasure.

At the end of their joint search effort, which lasted for one year, they succeeded in finding a narrow hidden pathway that led to the center of the dungeon.

As soon as they discovered the pathway, their collaboration ended.

Each organization sent their best to the pathway.

They were all thirsty with desire to eliminate the competition and take the treasure.

The explorers were anxiously searching through the pathway, and they made contact with the Doppelganger, the dungeon's lord who was asleep at the center.

When the explorers were about to attack the doppelganger, someone activated a trap which generated darkness and noise. Taking advantage of this narrow opportunity, Doppelganger disappeared.

Doppelganger is a very dangerous demon that could bring calamity to the human world.

You must not let the doppelganger leave the dungeon.

Fortunately, the exit is blocked by the collapsed ceiling.

Defeat the doppelganger and escape from the sealed dungeon.

[Clear condition]

Survive for seven days until the rescue party will arrive.

Find and eradicate the doppelganger.

When I finished reading the long message, a quiet voice reverberated across the space.

“Light.”

The man was wearing a big coned hat and wielding a wooden staff. Bright light was coming from his hand.

With the light, now I could clearly see the inside of the dungeon.

Including myself, there were six people.

As the message said, there were a holy knight, a knight, a mercenary, an adventurer, and a mage. Including myself, there were six.

“Doppelganger! The doppelganger is gone! Did it escape!?”

A big mercenary shouted.

I was not sure if he was the mercenary, but he was the only one in mercenary getup.

He sure has strong vocals.

He isn't just making the dungeon shake. I feel like my head is shaking too.

“The doppelganger is still here. Be careful. My holy object is

warning me that the demon is still in this place.”

That old man must be a holy knight.

Each of these people had strikingly unique getup, so it was easy to tell them apart.

“Could it be using a transparency magic? Doppelganger is a type of demon, so it must know how to use magic.”

That one must be an adventurer.

He has all sorts of items packed in the pockets and the bag.

His head is covered by a long hood, so I cannot see his face.

I could use the mana to check his face, but he is definitely a man, so I don't feel like doing that just to check his face.

“Detect Invisibility.”

The mage had been quiet after casting the light magic. Now, the mage used another spell.

Invisibility detection. So, there is such a spell too.

It must be convenient.

After a moment, the mage shook his head.

It meant he didn't detect anything through the spell.

My senses were telling me the same.

"There are just the six of us here."

Having heard my words, the holy knight lifted his head and expressed his doubt.

"But my holy object definitely... Ah, I see."

Why are you stopping in middle of the sentence?

What's 'ah, I see.' Instead of keeping it to yourself, why don't you share it with me too.

However, the holy knight's mouth was shut. It didn't open again.

There was a knight on the corner. It seemed he hurt his back. He was rubbing his back in the corner. Fortunately, the knight resolved my question.

"According to the records, the doppelganger takes on the subject's form after killing the person. When the quake happened

and the ceiling collapsed, it appears one of us was done in by the doppelganger. Everyone gathered here are all powerful warriors, yet the doppelganger managed to do with such a narrow opportunity. It is no wonder why it is a high demon.”

It seemed the knight liked to act like a smart-aleck. The snobby looking knight explained it step by step.

He is good at explaining it in a clean manner, however annoying he is.

I see his talent in explaining things.

To organize it, he was saying there is a doppelganger among the five, other than myself.

Also, I need to defeat that doppelganger before the rescue party arrives. I need to survive and escape the dungeon. These are the 16th Floor stage's theme.

This is fun.

The clear condition and message didn't say anything about the lives of the other four.

In other words, if I killed them all, which will include the doppelganger, then I will be able to clear the stage for sure.

I could be certain of clearing the stage if I did it that way, but I want to stay away from that idea as much as possible.

How long has it been since I entered the Tutorial?

For the first time, I met other humans in the Tutorial who were not challengers.

It was possible they were not really humans. However, they were at least from humanoid civilizations.

There is no need for me to set the direction that way from the start.

Doppelganger is not the important part.

It is their information that matters more.

Their world, culture, technology, magic, and holy power... I have so many things I want to ask.

In particular, my study of magic had hit a roadblock lately, so I am in desperate need for information, especially the mage's knowledge.

I should set the plan toward having conversations with them and resolving this doppelganger situation together.

[God of Adventure is satisfied with your decision.]

[God of Slowness is unhappy with it.]

The mage had his eyes met with mine by chance. The mage panicked a little and turned his head away.

Actually, it was not by coincidence. I was glaring at the mage.

Why is he acting that way?

Is he shy?

[God of Adventure is highly entertained.]

Two men looked at each other, and one of them avoided the stare. What's so entertaining to watch?

Ugh...

Chapter 94 - Tutorial 16th Floor (2)

“I don’t think it will work... We will have to sit tight and wait for the rescue party to come. I will be hard for us to clean up the debris and get out of here.”

The adventurer said that after checking out the exit that was blocked by the ceiling’s rubble.

“We have another matter that’s more important than that. The doppelganger is a dangerous demon. We must not let it escape to the outside. Before the rescue party comes, we must resolve this matter on our own here.”

The holy knight said that.

You don’t need to say that again. I kill the demon as well so I can clear the stage.

“However, figuring out the doppelganger is extremely difficult once it steals the likeness of a person. The doppelganger doesn’t just steal the appearance of a person; It also steals the memories and personality of the original, so you cannot tell it apart from the person so easily.”

As I thought, that knight is talented at giving exposition.

Was he an oil baron in his past life?

“Does anyone here know how to identify the doppelganger?”

The mercenary shouted in husky voice.

Having heard the man, everyone pondered deeply about it. However, it seemed nobody had any good ideas. They all kept silent.

“How about just trying to attack each other?”

Having heard what I just said, the holy knight panicked a little. He asked,

“Attack? What are you trying to say?”

“About the doppelganger. Does it reveal its true self when it is attacked?”

“It will! Even a doppelganger will reveal its demonic form to survive when attacked because its power in its demonic form will be stronger. However, we don’t know who is the doppelganger, so how are we supposed to attack the doppelganger?”

The kind knight explained.

There is a way.

“I do have a thought. I wonder what everyone would think of this plan.”

“What do you have in mind?”

“In my town, we call this the mafia game.”

*

“So, after having a discussion and concluding it each day, gather everyone’s opinions, select the doppelganger and attack the selected person?”

“Yes.”

That knight over there has superb talent for explaining things.

Using the mafia game method, people will naturally be forced to take turns and talk about themselves.

Instead of the identity of the doppelganger, I am more curious about the people’s stories, so this is the best method for me.

“Denied.”

The mage said in quiet voice.

The adventurer laughed as he crouched and sat the corner.

“It looks like you guys don’t even have the level of a rat’s shit about understanding demons. A doppelganger is a powerful high demon. I cannot be certain of the victory even if the five besides the doppelganger were to join forces and attacked it together. Let’s assume we did collect our thoughts and attacked one person. It would be good if we got the right one. However, what if we got the wrong one? If we lose even just one person, we won’t be able to defeat the doppelganger.”

“Ah, you don’t have to worry about that. I’ll kill the doppelganger.”

“You? How?”

“I intend to kill it by myself.”

Also, if possible, I hope others won’t interfere and get in my way.

The experience points I gain might decrease if other people join me in hunting down the doppelganger.

I never heard about a doppelganger.

Obviously, I don’t have a way of knowing how strong a doppelganger is.

However, I could make a guess.

It is the matter of the Tutorial stage's setting.

First, the challenger must find the doppelganger while minimizing casualties.

From the doppelganger's perspective, it would want to reduce the number of foes as much as possible before it gets discovered.

It might ambush someone when it has the chance. It might cause strife between people. It could also try to deflect attention to a scapegoat.

Second, the challenger must defeat the doppelganger with the remaining people once he is revealed.

The question is how many of the challengers will still be alive by the time the doppelganger is discovered.

The adventurer said it will be very dangerous to fight the doppelganger with just four people, and the group would stand a slim chance of victory even with all five people.

Assuming the challenger is stronger than the average strength of the other five, the challenger must have at work with at least three or four survivors to stand a chance against the doppelganger.

However, such a plan applies only for ordinary challengers.

It is a completely different story for me.

If the doppelganger is a little stronger than or is on par with the combined power of the five here, then the doppelganger is not strong enough to beat me.

Honestly, I could fight them off if a group of four and the doppelganger came at me at once, and I could win.

Of course, the group didn't think so.

“Bravado.”

“That's nonsense. Are you out of your mind? Kill a demon by yourself? Why don't you say you can kill a dragon by yourself too?”

I think it would be faster if I just demonstrated my power instead of explaining it in words.

Bearing that thought, I carried my will in mana and used a skill.

[Overwhelm (Lv.3)]

Explanation: Spread mana to the surrounding and overwhelm

the weaker opponents.

I learned this skill by chance while I was practicing the telepathic communication that I learned from the master monk at the 13th Floor.

As I practiced the skill alone, I realized that this skill was responsible for the strange sense of pressure I felt from the master monk.

Because of this pressure, I overestimated the monk's combat potential, and was overly cautious.

The skill was similar to the telepathic communication, which allowed me to convey meanings by carrying my will through the mana.

The skill didn't contain detailed meaning in the mana. Instead, it overwhelmed the weaker opponents with pressure.

When they are affected by the Overwhelm skill, they will discern a strong battle spirit from the caster and feel the overwhelming pressure creeping into their hearts.

To the affected individuals, the caster's existence will appear to be huge and mysterious as if there is something hidden within.

The difference in strength will appear to be greater than it actually is.

Of course, the skill won't actually deteriorate the stats of an affected individual. The skill was essentially a bluff skill.

Carrying my will, the mana reached the group, who backed away in fear.

They all panicked and quickly took steps back. They all brought their hands toward their weapons.

“Now, let's assume I am the doppelganger. Ah, don't do anything while I'm talking. I'm going to attack you without warning if you do.”

The group's eyes became even sharper and violent.

They were under the skill's effect, yet it appeared that they didn't lose their fighting spirit.

“If I am the doppelganger, then you guys don't stand a chance of victory to begin with. It won't matter to me if my identity is discovered or not.”

“Ah. We won't know until we tried fighting you. The five of us here are all quite famous in the continent.”

“You should listen to the end. If I am not the doppelganger, then the opposite situation will happen. As long as you guys can figure

out who the doppelganger is, I will be able to kill it no matter how many people are still left by then. Considering that, isn't it worth assuming that I am not the doppelganger?"

"So, as a way to figure out who the doppelganger is, you want us to take turns and tell stories about ourselves?"

The holy knight asked.

"That's right. Even if the doppelganger can mimic the person's memories and personality, talking for a very long time might lead to a few mistakes, don't you think? It is not like we are talking about just a few sentences. Talking about oneself for a whole day can cause the doppelganger to drop clues unconsciously."

The dungeon fell to silence as I finished my monologue.

It looked like they were all diligently contemplating.

Will they be convinced by my words?

Most probably won't be.

Although I was the one who said it, it was not all that convincing.

After a while, the holy knight said,

“I agree about taking turns to talk. First, I would like to ask about you. I actually know a bit about the other four. I met them a few times while we were searching the dungeon as well. However, I don’t have any information about you. Why don’t you start with an introduction about yourself?”

The holy knight just made it annoying for me.

My goal is hearing their stories and gaining information.

This was a rare opportunity for me to get past the Tutorial system’s restriction and obtain free information. I cannot just let it pass me by.

However, I cannot tell them about me in honest manner either.

They won’t believe what I have to say about my true identity.

It’s not like I could tell them the truth and say that I am Korean and a former professional gamer who is currently in the Tutorial stage, can’t I?

I need to properly hide my identity.

I thought about the message I read earlier and slowly said,

“I am here to... obtain the treasure that’s said to be hidden in this dungeon. I am sorry, but I won’t be able to tell you about my

identity in detail. There are plenty of influential organizations who would send someone in secret to secure the treasure, right? Just think that I'm from one of those."

I think I talked my way out of it pretty well.

However, the people didn't think so.

"You were the one who told us to talk, yet you are the one who is hiding your identity. Honestly, you are the most suspicious one here, you know that? You are the one who looks like the doppelganger the most. Are you scheming to get information out of us? Is that why you asked us to talk about ourselves?"

The adventurer casually hid one hand behind his back as he said that.

Wow, that was sharp.

He was right. It was a scheme to get information by having them talk.

I can't think of anything to say in response to the adventurer.

Because I was not able to say anything back right away, everyone slowly positioned their stances through small movements.

"Also, I cannot agree to what you said earlier either. Hope that

you are not a doppelganger since that will give us best chance of survival? If we do as you say and the doppelganger escapes to the outside, that will bring huge chaos to the world. Even if we only stand a narrow chance of victory, if the five of us fight together against you and we should be able to inflict serious damage and drag out your true form. After that, when the exit opens, our comrades will be able to put an end to a bastard like you.”

Oh my... You sure have a global perspective, our great holy knight sir.

Considering the change in the tone throughout what he just said, it looks like he is certain I am the doppelganger.

The group looked like they would strike at any moment. I wanted to moan of frustration.

I tried hard to convince them the best I could. As I thought, I am still clumsy at convincing people.

Now, they were drawing their weapons right in front of me. They aren't even trying to be stealthy about it. I waved my hand around and said to the group,

“Ah, wait a minute. Let me say one more thing.”

“Trying to scheme to the end! Die, you demon bastard!”

The adventurer threw a dagger at me, initiating the battle.

So, in the end, this is what happens?

Ugh, time to go back to the usual method.

I should just beat them senseless and then have a conversation with them.

First, I didn't dodge the dagger. I caught it with a light movement with my hand.

I am so sick of projectile attacks.

I had gone through excruciating experiences during my early days in the Tutorial and learned.

I promptly threw the dagger back at the adventurer.

The dagger flew at the adventurer whistling through the air, and the adventurer dove away.

The mercenary came close to be before I realized. I dodged his axe and quickly moved away.

I was fighting a combined force of a holy knight, a knight, an adventurer, a mercenary and a mage.

I had no need to act like a dumb monster in an RPG game that fights the frontline fighters who draw attention.

The most important target is the mage.

The mercenary was trying to keep me here, but I ignored him and quickly approached the mage.

The mage was reciting the spell. He was just mumbling something and was neglecting preparations to defend himself.

Chwaaaaak~

At that moment, the holy knight put himself between me and the mage.

Oh, that was quick.

Looks like you anticipated that I will go for the mage?

The holy knight was wielding a mace on his right hand, and raised it to strike me.

Instead of taking steps back, I charged in and caught the holy knight's wrist.

Afterwards, I hit the holy knight's right shoulder with my other

hand.

He is wearing a thick armor, so I cannot not be certain, but his shoulder blade is probably broken.

The holy knight ignored the pain and swung the large shield on his left hand.

I took half a step back and dodged the shield. While at it, I lightly kicked the holy knight's ankle.

The holy knight crumbled down and fell immediately.

His center of gravity was shaken at the moment, and he was not able to withstand the weight of his heavy armor.

“Uraaaaaait!”

Instead of wasting more time at the holy knight who just fell, I directed my gaze to the mage.

By the I approached the mage again, the mage completed chanting the spell.

“Flame Strike!”

A giant lump of flame burst toward my face.

[Battle Focus]

Damn it. The holy knight is still on the ground in the magic's effective area, but the mage shot the magic spell anyway.

He is quite the heartless one.

I could dodge it safely if I used the Blink and retreated. However, then I'll be putting distance between myself and the mage.

Also, after they see my Blink move, they'll block my path to the mage like an iron wall.

I need to win while they are all scattered.

If they make a formation around the mage and start to hold out, then that will get very annoying.

I should just force my way through this.

[Talaria's Wings]

The Talaria's Wings has high magic defense. I covered my front with the wings and stopped the lump of fire that was flying towards me.

It's pretty hot. I have fire element resistance, but even I think it is hot.

It is pretty powerful.

The holy knight on the ground gasped for air desperately, like he was going to die.

Remember, I just saved your ass, sir holy knight.

Immediately after blocking the fire magic, I approached the mage from the front and forcefully kicked him.

This is Sparta!

The mage didn't even have the chance to scream. He was thrown to the back of the cave and collided with the wall.

It was too powerful of a kick for a mage with weak body to withstand.

He is probably unconscious at least. He might actually be knocking on the gate of death.

It would be a shame if he died.

I have so many things I want to ask him.

It appeared that the mage had lost consciousness. The light, the spell that was illuminating the area, was suddenly disengaged.

The dungeon fell under the cover of darkness once again.

First of all, it seems like the mage is not the doppelganger.

“Damn it. Biruson! Do you have a lantern?”

“Wait a sec! I have a flare...!”

I had exceptionally good perception throughout day and night and even Energy Sensory. I could secure clear visual in the darkness and move around unhindered.

I quietly approached the adventurer who was busy searching his pockets for the flare.

My stealth skill's level was not low either, so it would be hard for them to notice my movement in the darkness.

After getting closer to the adventurer, I warmed up my hands by repeating the motion of making fists and opening them.

For a while now, the way the adventurer bastard was talking to me was getting on my nerves.

From this moment, I shall sentence you for a super hard strike on the pit of the stomach.

Chapter 95 - Tutorial 16th Floor (3)

I was about to approach the adventurer stealthily and strike him his stomach. At that moment, the adventurer suddenly moved.

He threw himself to the back and tossed something toward me with the hand that he was using to search his bag.

“Take this!”

What he brought out from the bag was not a lantern.

It was a round marble. He threw it toward me.

Apparently, the adventurer was not bothered by the darkness either. The marble’s trajectory made haste to my face.

It looks like he was feigning ignorance and waiting for me to come closer to him.

I swung my hand and swiped the marble.

Instead of being bounced off, the marble shattered.

After that, the contents inside the marble got spread on my face and body.

It's wet.

“Poison?”

“That's right. It's poison, you demon bastard! Now, show your true self! If you stay hidden under human skin, you will die from the poison!”

The adventurer shouted with confidence.

I licked the poison with my tongue. It was jolting my tongue.

And that was that.

Ever since I obtained the great poison resistance skill, I was fine even when I tried drinking the bottle of poison sold at the store.

I won't sustain much harm unless it is an extremely powerful poison.

I am not resistant to all poisons, but I am resistant to quite many.

It was not the poison's effect that bothered me. I just found it unpleasant to have a wet face.

Having noticed that I was relatively indifferent to the poison, the adventurer panicked. He quickly approached me.

He was trying to quickly pull out something from his pocket. I tightly twisted his shoulder with my left hand and channeled my annoyance into my right fist.

My angry punch, plummeted into the adventurer's stomach.

I punched him hard. Super hard.

I threw my punch while being affected by strength boost from the Talaria's Wings. I thought the adventurer's body might burst a little. However, it seemed the man was pretty tough. His body didn't burst open from the shock.

He is coughing blood from the mouth though.

The adventurer curled his body like a shrimp and fell down. He was twitching. It appeared that he was in shock.

Boooooong~

From somewhere, a sound could be heard. It sounded like the lightsaber effect from the St*r W*rs when it was activated. I turned around, and the knight's sword was exuding blue mana.

He was pouring so much mana into the sword that the steady blue light from the sword was bright enough to see people's faces.

You are pouring in mana too inefficiently.

If it was the darkness that was the problem, then he should have engulfed the sword with the thinnest layer of mana he could create and spread the rest of the mana to the surrounding or focused it on his eyes. Doing either of those would have been more efficient.

Now, there are just the knight, holy knight and the mercenary; so three small hurdles.

“Uuuuuaaaa! For the Emperor!”

I knew you would say that.

I brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory, formed a long sword and parried the bluish sword.

Kaaaang!

The loud sound echoed throughout the dungeon.

The collision of mana pushed the knight far back.

Oh. His attack was more powerful than I thought.

It looks like he is the strongest among the group.

The knight shouted again and charged in.

With flashy sword swings, he threw fierce and sharp attacks at me.

His moves were... quite cool.

Honestly, this is the first time I've seen proper swordsmanship.

Until now, I had only been watching monsters swinging stone axes day after day. Now, I was witnessing flashy yet disciplined moves by a knight. It was intriguing.

His swordsmanship was different from how Idy's spear techniques aimed for the gap in the opponent with precise moves. As I said earlier, the knight's moves were flashy.

Not only were his individual moves extremely clean, the stances between the moves were also graceful and majestic.

On top of this, he had blue light surrounding his sword, and the light was illuminating the entire room. He really looked like a hero from a fiction story.

His swordsmanship was super cool. However, I noticed that he did have a few moves here and there that were added for the sole purpose of looking cool.

For instance, after attacking once, he always took a step back to calm his breathing.

After that, before he started the next attack, he always took a ceremonial stance.

It looks majestic. However, his moves are appropriate only in a duel with a rule that promises a break after each attack to catch breath.

In normal circumstances, like this...

Puk!

It is only natural that the weakness in his ways would be exploited by experienced warriors.

I kicked the knight away from my foot. He rolled to the back from the impact. The knight huffed and puffed and got up right away.

“That’s disgraceful!”

What’s disgraceful?

The knight took a stance and intensified his concentration.

Oh, what's this? A super move?

The blue light in his sword became even brighter.

You are in middle of a battle. Using such a time-consuming technique is not wise.

Who is going to wait for you to finish that?

It seemed that this knight was lacking in real combat experience.

Is he a Young Master from a high nobility?

Still, to show my gratitude for his demonstration of amazing swordsmanship, I decided to wait for him to prepare his super move.

I was curious about its power as well.

I also brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms and formed a long sword.

The knight peeked a smile and said,

“Try withstanding my attack! It is an ability of my total strength and the ability of Alamas, the treasured sword bestowed by the Emperor! Nobody has ever survived this attack!”

By the way, after you recite a line like that to the opponents, won't they try to dodge it instead of taking it head-on?

I wonder how many of his foes actually sat tight and waited for the attack to be ready and graciously received it?

Watching the knight rambling on about the power of the attack, I questioned the effectiveness of this strategy.

Regardless, it seemed the knight was quite confident about this attack.

Even I could feel considerable power concentrated in his sword.

I could feel waves of mana emanating from the sword itself. It seemed the sword really did have a special ability.

I gathered more mana onto my body and prepared to step up my strength.

Ever since I had been handling mana through the mana circuit at the Sixth Floor, I occasionally layered weapons with mana and fought with them.

Doing so strengthened the weapon to a whole another level.

This was different from the aura sword or aura blade; it's not the

same old crap that gets tossed around too often in fantasy novels.

By layering a weapon with mana, its destructive power is exponentially increased, and the weapon got to have a sharper edge. On top of this, the weapon doesn't break as fast.

Also, ever since I obtained the energy sensory and heightened my mana operation ability at the 13th Floor, the power of my layering technique increased substantially.

After a moment, the knight shouted in loud voice. It seemed he was ready.

“Here I come!”

After that, the knight quickly charged toward me.

It would have been all right if you charged at me without telling me.

In response, I also swung the mana-layered long sword to parry the knight's sword.

Kwang!

It didn't sound like a clash between swords. It sounded more like a firework explosion. As soon as the swords clashed, the knight was pushed backwards again.

Oh, as I thought, this knight is pretty strong.

I swung my sword with intention of making him fall immediately. Instead, the knight withstood the impact and only got pushed back.

He did falter a little, but he didn't fall.

He is incredible.

One disappointing thing about this exchange was that the knight's attack was his super move and mine was a regular move.

The knight was having hard time standing. He was also having difficulty catching his breath as I slowly walked toward the knight.

His legs were buckling.

Just like the adventurer, I finished him with the fist.

The knight let go of the sword and raised his two arms to defend himself, but he was thrown to the back from the impact and collided with the wall.

Now, there's just the holy knight and the mercenary?

“Uuhahaha! This is the end, you demon bastard!”

It was an annoyingly screeching voice. It was torturing my eardrums.

I looked at the mercenary, and noticed that the mage was doing something.

There were strange symbols drawn on the floor.

A semi-transparent layer was cast to block the path between me and the symbols, which were at the center of the circular barrier.

Is it a mana shield?

Inside the layer, there were the holy knight, mercenary and the mage.

Looking at them together, I figured out what happened.

The holy knight healed the mage. While the knight was buying them time, the mage established the barrier.

Earlier, that holy knight almost died as a collateral from the mage's spell. I am surprised that he promptly decided to heal the mage.

“Is that really worth celebrating?”

I can just shatter the barrier.

Actually, even if the barrier is sturdy, it can only guarantee their safety for a brief moment. They won't be able to turn the tables against me.

“Of course...! Cuulok... Cuulok!”

The knight who was stuck at a corner was going to say something, but he coughed violently.

Does he actually want to explain the situation, even in his current state?

“T... that mage is the master of the Maruathen Magic Tower! Also, the Maruathen Magic Tower is famous for surekill AoE magic. It could be said that their abilities are best suited for a large-scale war than a small skirmish. Long casting time is a drawback, but it is a different story if he can patiently prepare the magic inside the barrier. From what I can hear, he is preparing his most powerful magic! It will take an hour to cast, but its power is incredible! You may be a high demon, but you won't be able to survive its destructive power.”

That rascal sure loves to explain stuff.

Anyway, it takes an hour to cast the magic?

Honestly, I was underestimating the spell that the mage was preparing.

I didn't detect much mana from him, so I was intending on blocking it with the Talaria's Wings. However, it is a magic spell that takes one hour to prepare.

I had never experienced this kind of magic, so it was hard to estimate its power.

It looks like the other factor is the power of that barrier.

The battle will depend on my ability to break through the barrier within the hour.

Fortunately, there's plenty of time.

“Hey, you dumbass! Please shut that mouth of yours! Why are you handing him information on a silver platter!”

The mercenary yelled at the knight.

You are so right.

“By the way, if a magic of such power is used, won't you be killed as well? You are outside of the barrier.”

“... Probably. However, I am not afraid! I have taken an oath that day to become a sword who protects the Emperor and the people of the kingdom! I...”

The knight started to go on and on, blathering about himself. I ignored him and observed the barrier instead.

It sure is tough, but it does not look like it will be able to withstand many of my attacks.

Of course, I won't be certain unless I tried striking it first.

“... So! I am not afraid! Of course, I am still a human being, so I cannot be completely indifferent about death. However, with Roben, a childhood friend of mine...”

This guy has a really thorough and solid concept for his character.

The knight was rambling on about the promise and the dream he shared with his childhood friend who he had not seen in a very long time. I interrupted him and questioned him,

“By any chance, does this barrier have a weakness?”

“Of course there is! The special characteristic of the barrier magic circle by the Maruathen Magic Tower is...”

“Hey! You numbskull bastard! Are you really not going to shut your pie hole! Are you trying to get all of us killed!?”

From beyond the barrier, the mercenary shouted with anxious and red-faced.

That’s too bad.

With just a little bit more time, the knight with a compulsive explanatory disorder would have slipped and told me about the barrier’s weakness.

Although the knight was not acting like one, he and I were on the same boat.

We could both survive only if that barrier was shattered.

He said he was not afraid to die. However, he appeared to be a Young Master from a high nobility. He probably would not want a pathetic death under a ruin like this.

“Sir Aruhan, I’ll definitely tell the Empire of your great sacrifice, so please, wait quietly.”

Even the holy knight, who had been quiet all this time, stepped in and stopped the knight.

“Thank you! In that case, I will be able to close my eyes without any regrets!”

Are you being serious? Aren't you overflowing with regrets and desire to live?

“Now, I'll quietly face my final moment. Hey, you demon! Your final moment is also nigh, so I guess my journey to hell won't be lonely. That magic by the Master of Maruathen Magic Tower is a high difficulty spell that requires extreme focus for one hour, but its power is...”

It requires extreme focus for one hour?

I am quite proud of my ability to maintain focus, so I know how difficult that is.

Focus can be broken easily by trivial annoyance.

For example...

“Soul Steal.”

“Kuuuaaak!”

The mage inside the barrier collapsed after coughing blood.

“Hey! You son of a bitch!!”

The mercenary’s infuriated voice echoed through the dungeon.

Chapter 96 - Tutorial 16th Floor (4)

“Acknowledge?”

“I... I’ll acknowledge your strength.”

“All right. Here is a potion.”

The mercenary collapsed on the floor with his legs and arms completely crushed. I handed him a potion.

The only limb that was still relatively functional was his left arm. He grabbed the potion with his left hand and chugged the potion’s content.

I was sure he must be experiencing substantial pain right now. However, he finished drinking the potion without screaming too loudly. He then started to massage his body.

After the mage coughed off blood and lost consciousness, the battle ended in less than 15 minutes.

The result was obviously my victory.

After the barrier disappeared, I beat the crap out of the holy knight and then the mercenary. Afterwards, nobody else tried to come at me.

To be precise, there wasn't anyone left who could fight me.

Unexpectedly holy knight was weaker than I thought.

At first, I thought he was a holy knight who happened to also have mastered the holy healing spell. Instead, it seemed he was closer to being a healer. His combat potential was quite lacking.

I think he could be more difficult to fight against than other warriors of the same level if he actively used his holy spells in battle.

Also, the mercenary was more tenacious than I thought.

The impression I got from looking at the man's face was that he was the type who would give up after a good beating or two. However, he came at me to the bitter end. As of result, he was almost beaten to death.

To put it positively, he had grit and persistence. To put it negatively, he was incredibly dumb.

Until the battle ended, everyone inside the dungeon took turns and received beating from me. However, the doppelganger did not reveal itself.

It could be that the doppelganger was aware that my attacks did not have killing intent, so it did not feel the need to reveal itself. It could be that there was a restriction on revealing itself. I was not

certain.

Anyway, that was actually a good thing.

For me, there was nothing good that could have come from the doppelganger revealing itself at this very moment.

I needed the doppelganger and the people here to spit out information for me.

I have plenty of time to defeat the doppelganger.

I cannot someone die already; there was too much opportunity.

The mercenary finished drinking the potion. He dusted himself off, got up and complained,

“God damn it. If it wasn’t for that snobby scaredy cat over there...”

He was talking about the knight who ran his mouth off about the mage and contributed to the mage’s collapse when the mage was holding the barrier.

The knight stayed at a corner and fiddled with his armor. He pretended as if he didn’t hear the mercenary.

“Don’t be so hard on him. Even without the information about the barrier magic requiring high focus, it would not have withstood my attacks for an hour.”

“... God damn it. You heard about that one hour thing from that knight as well.”

Now that you mentioned it, that is true.

I can totally understand why the mercenary is grinding his teeth in frustration.

I think the mercenary and the others would see the knight as a traitor?

Why did the knight do all that?

Perhaps he is just one of those personalities who cannot stand it unless he explains everything he knows in verbose detail.

If that is the case, that knight really should be treated as an idiot.

If that is not the case, then it is also possible that he did it while feigning stupidity simply because he did not want to die.

He is a knight who values honor above all else. He could not afford to let others catch onto his desperation to live and his attempt to ruin their plan in the process. So, he handed over

information to me and neutralized the mage.

If that was the case, then there was nothing that could be said in his defense if everyone accused him as a knight without honor.

There was a third possibility.

He still didn't want to die, but he wasn't trying to conceal his desperation. He could be the doppelganger in disguise.

If the knight's true identity is the doppelganger under the guise of a human, then it is not restricted by the title of the knight and his ways. It would leak information without feeling guilty about it.

I carefully observed the gazes from the mercenary and the holy knight toward the knight. Their eyes didn't look like they were simply criticizing the knight as a traitor.

Their gazes contained strong doubts and suspicions.

Personally, I think it is obvious that any human being would not want to die.

Therefore, I am giving the second and third possibilities equal weight.

However, the mercenary and the holy knight kept to the idea that an honorable knight would not do this. It seemed they were

certain that the third possibility was the right answer.

Is the knight a dumbass, a chicken or the doppelganger?

No matter which one was the right answer, it was hopeless.

I think the knight did what he did to survive.

The mercenary and holy knight's attitude toward me toned down a little after I gave them some time after their beating. It is probably because of the knight.

Now, they are finding the knight more suspicious than me.

Honestly, it does not matter if the knight is the doppelganger.

Actually, it is not a bad thing if the knight is the doppelganger and gave me more information on how to survive the danger.

The mage was still unconscious.

He fell unconscious twice so far, and the last time, he collapsed because he lost focus in middle of casting magic and his mana ran amok. He must have suffered substantial internal damage.

Because of this, the holy knight said it would be best to leave the mage be for half a day.

In addition, he planned to give treatment in one to two hours intervals.

As for the adventurer, he was not able to get back up because I beat him too hard. I handed a potion to the mercenary who was getting up and told him to tend to the adventurer who was still in pain.

From what I saw earlier, it seemed the mercenary and the adventurer were pretty close.

After waiting for a moment, the adventurer also gasped loudly and got up.

It looks like he was hurt pretty badly.

Adventurer, why weren't you kinder with words earlier.

"Now, everyone, shall we start our conversations again?"

I clapped and gathered everyone's attention.

"Are you talking about that Mafia game earlier?"

The mercenary asked.

It is a proactive question. I like his attitude.

“No.”

Surprised, people stared at me. I told them what I was really thinking.

“That was actually just a ploy to get information from all of you. Now, I don’t need to bother with such a game.”

Looking at people’s dumbfounded face, I continued.

“Now, you guys have a simple job to do. Just take turns and start talking.”

“Talk about what?”

“Everything. Geography, history, religion, politics, literature, economics and other basic knowledge. The information about the organization you belong to. Treasures, magic, monsters, armor, information about dungeons, experiences from the childhood, common courtesies and manners, or even things like unfounded rumors you heard from somewhere are fine too. I would like you to tell me everything you know.”

Their eyes were soaking in anxieties and suspicions.

I subdued them. However, I was not finishing them off like a

logical opponent would, which made them suspicious of me again.

I was directly asking for information about the world. They were suspicious about the possibility that I might be the doppelganger.

Their minds must be pretty convoluted right about now.

I can clearly see them twiddling their thumbs anxiously.

Sure, I just had their asses handed to them. Still, I bet they were concerned if it would be all right to give information to someone who might be a demon. They might even be considering fighting me again even if it means a certain death for them.

I used Overwhelm skill again and amplified my power.

The effect was intensified when the opponent felt the difference in strength was high. It was also amplified when the opponent was mentally subdued.

They just got beat up by me, and they just came to their senses.

The conditions of their bodies could not be all that great at the moment either.

The overwhelming pressure they will be feeling this time will be incomparable to what they experienced before the battle.

If they were merely uncomfortable about me during the last time, I bet they are feeling like someone is pressing down on their shoulders this time.

“Now, everyone.”

I layered my hand with mana and clapped hard as I said in low voice. Everyone shriveled and flinched.

“Shall we start talking now? I have a lot of things I’m curious about. I might even get angry if everyone keeps silence like this.”

The adventurer was the one who received the most severe beating from me. He was breaking out a cold sweat.

Nobody started to talk. They just glanced at each other.

Is everyone hoping for someone else to start?

I felt the need to subject them to a new threat. I pondered what I should use, but someone raised his hand.

It was like a diligent honor student at school answering the teacher’s answer. The knight politely raised his hand and said,

“I want to start!”

His eyes were sparkling. While others were glancing around and hoping someone else would start, it seemed the knight was glancing around to check if it would be all right for him to start. There's no mistake. I was certain of this.

I nodded in anticipation.

“Thank you! My name is Kaesis Aruhan. My grandfather named me during the day I was born...”

Like that, the knight started telling his story, starting from the day of his birth.

His story went on for a long time. He was still not done when it was almost the midnight of the first day at the dungeon.

By the time I stopped him so we could all sleep, the knight was only up to when he was 11 years old and just entering school.

His story was surprisingly detailed.

Thanks to his story, I learned about even the most trivial things of this 16th Floor stage's world.

Even when he was just talking about dinner, he described individual dining items with meticulous detail.

Things like the varieties of the dining items, people who make

them, the items' prices, and even how his families thought of the makers... He told me so much. Thanks to him, my mind was overflowing with new information.

On top of this, his stories were intriguing.

He was talking about such useless things, yet he could maintain the audiences' attention so well.

The knight was exceptionally talented as a storyteller.

Occasionally, when his stories were too exaggerated or embellished, the mercenary or the adventurer butted in to correct the story.

Honestly, this was a lot of fun.

Before I realized, the atmosphere had changed to bunch of school classmates on a trip who were sharing stories before bed.

I even brought out snacks and drinks from the dimensional bag and munched on them as I enjoyed the stories.

It seemed this world also had a dimensional bag. Although the people were a little intrigued by the bag, they weren't shocked by it.

The knight's stories were interesting, but they were not without

flaws.

He liked talking way too much, and he was describing everything that came to his mind, so the actual story progression was at a snail's pace. It was frustrating.

Also, his stories went tangent often. While talking about a method for checking the quality of a carpet, he found his way to talking about how his grandfather entered the castle and received a title after achieving a great exploit.

Also, while talking for several hours, he never once shut his mouth.

He didn't even take a break to eat any snacks. He just occasionally sipped on wine to quench his throat and focused on telling the stories.

It was incredibly fortunate that the man never repeated a story that he told.

The time went on since the knight started telling the stories. An hour, two hours... By the time we got to the three-hour mark, I learned that listening to stories for an extended period of time was a laborious duty, both physically and mentally.

By the time we reached five hours, my head felt blurry.

By the time it was at the five-hour mark, others started to doze

off, so I told him we should stop here and continue the rest tomorrow.

Others seemed relieved to hear it. Meanwhile, the knight looked disappointed that he could not chatter away some more.

Doesn't your throat hurt?

The people scattered about the dungeon room so they could get some sleep.

They agreed with each other to not get too close while sleeping. They even warned that anyone who approaches will be attacked.

This didn't matter to me, but the people were very conscious about their safety while sleeping.

I opened a sleeping bag from the inventory and lied down at a corner.

I should run mana circuits while organizing the stories I heard from the knight.

Thirty minutes passed while I was doing that before I was interrupted by someone's quietly mumbling.

"I'm certain he ran his mouth so he could survive and chatter away afterwards. If that guy drowned and died, I bet only his

mouth will float up.”

Judging from the voice, I thought it was the mercenary.

I totally agree.

*

I checked the time using the pocket watch I took from the adventurer and got out of the sleeping bag.

I couldn't sleep.

My insomnia didn't allow me to sleep in a sealed room with potential enemies.

Nobody showed any suspicious behaviors during the night.

Honestly, I thought the doppelganger might make a move while everyone was asleep. However, I was worried over nothing.

I walked around the dungeon room and woke up the people.

It was morning.

First, I should eat breakfast, and then... listen to the knight rascal's bladder-mouth.

Today, I should ask him about his swordsmanship before he talks about his childhood.

I should ask about the holy knight's religion. I also need to ask the adventurer about the dungeon.

From what I heard yesterday, it seemed like the mercenary knew a lot about the customs of this world.

More importantly, I need the mage to wake up so I can hear his stories about magic.

If he is unable to wake up by tonight, I should seriously consider using the Elixir.

Other than the mage, who was still unconscious, I gathered the rest and brought out food from the dimensional bag.

The people seemed to be carrying meat jerkies or other dried foods. However, perhaps because they tasted the food I brought out last night, it seemed they were not even deliberating about bringing out their own tasteless dried foods.

We were all quietly enjoying the meals before the knight politely raised his hand.

“Can I tell the story while we eat?”

“... Please. No.”

“Please keep your mouth shut while we eat. I beg of you.”

“You should be respectful while people eat, Sir Aruhan. Please restrain yourself.”

The knight was met with stern resistance from the three. The knight looked a little disappointed.

For a moment, it looked like he was going to say something. However, the knight gave up and started to eat.

Could it be that talking while eating is a serious violation of courtesy in this world?

Maybe they just wanted to plug that chatterbox knight's mouth?

I think it is the latter.

[God of Adventure is disappointed.]

Chapter 97 - Tutorial 16th Floor (5)

After breakfast, the holy knight was performing his after meal prayer. I asked him about his religion.

He gladly told me about his religion.

However, he casually skipped the parts about holy spells or holy power.

He seemed hesitant to tell me about them because they were directly related to combat.

I didn't want to insist on having him tell me everything. Instead, I asked about his religion in general.

The holy knight said the god he believed in was God of Balance.

Instead of asking about the God of Balance and his religious organization's complicated philosophies, I asked about the religion's common knowledge.

In Urphan Continent, which was the setting of the 16th Floor stage, people believed in many gods. On the contrary, only the people of holy temples worshiped just one god.

Also, he said that it was a common practice for people to pray to a specific god depending on the situation.

He said that because holy knights and priests believe in one specific god, they are able to use holy spells by borrowing the god's holy power.

Uniquely enough, there were priests and holy knights who did not belong to any particular religious organizations.

In this world, it seemed that the relationship between the believers and the gods were more important than the organizations and the gods.

The holy knight said there are many great holy knights who never even walked up to the door of a religious organization's building. He also said there are priests who never once read the bibles of their churches and just run meditation temples or care centers for elders or children.

He said the religious organizations do not doubt the people's faith.

It was because the people would not be able to reach the gods if they lacked faith.

I found it intriguing.

All these were very new to me.

I was just as intrigued when I heard the knight's story yesterday, but I was reminded yet again that this place was a different world and not Earth.

While explaining about the religions, the holy knight said something else.

“It looks like you really don't know anything. I honestly thought you might have been a holy knight or a priest who does not belong to any particular religious organization.”

Was there anything about my behavior that were becoming of a religious man?

I asked why the holy knight thought so.

“It's nothing unusual. I thought I felt a trace of holy power from your mana. Perhaps I was mistaken.”

Now that I think about it, the Master Monk from the 13th Floor told me about this.

The priests could feel the holy energy from others' mana, and it serves as identification among the priests.

“You probably did feel holy power. I am not a priest, but I am going through the trial to become an apostle. I possess Power Skills as well.”

“An apostle! You also possess Power Skills! Are you talking about the power of a God?”

The holy knight was excited to hear what I just said. He drew the holy symbol with his hand.

“If you really are an apostle of a God, then I can understand your incredible power. The Priestess of Ausoli, the one who worships the God of Sun, is said to be an apostle of the god. Considering the amazing exploits she achieved, I am not so surprised by your strength.”

The knight snuck into the conversation and said that.

Could this Priestess be someone who completed the trial and became an apostle or could it be that she is still in middle of the trial?

I should ask the holy knight about the Priestess’s history later.

“Excuse me, but may I ask about the god you believe in?”

God, huh...

I guess I can mention either the God of Adventure or God of Slowness.

He said priests only worshipped one god, so he will be confused if I mention both.

Let's see...

Who should I mention as the one I believe?

[God of Slowness is desperately trying to look casual while watching you.]

[God of Adventure is looking at you with high expectations.]

They are responding right away.

Let's think about this first.

Considering the characteristics of the God of Adventure, many people might know about this god in this world.

If there are many religious organizations about the God of Adventure spread across the continent of this world, I will look suspicious for not knowing about them if I tell the holy knight that I worship the God of Adventure.

On the contrary, I don't think the God of Slowness is well known.

When Kiri Kiri explained about God of Slowness, she said being an apostle for the God of Slowness is not something a human being should do.

Also, when I talked to the Master Monk at the 13th Floor, he said he never heard of the God of Slowness.

It's anecdotal information, but they all indicate that the God of Slowness is not well known.

I gave my response while hoping not much was known about the God of Slowness in the Urphan continent

“I believe in God of Slowness.”

“Um... I have not heard of this god...”

“I have not heard of this god either. I know most of the hundred gods of the continent, but this is the first time for me to hear about the God of Slowness.”

This is good.

As I thought, God of Slowness is a manor god who is not well known among the people.

“The God of Slowness values perseverance and patience. Most of the believers are isolated deep in the mountains, so our god is not well known. We don’t know much about the outside world either.”

“I see. I can understand why you don’t know much about the outside world. Did you come here after receiving a divine message? Perhaps you are here as a part of your trial to become an apostle.”

“Well, it is something like that.”

I haphazardly muttered.

[God of Slowness is flexing.]

[God of Adventure is disappointed.]

[God of Slowness is making fun of someone.]

[God of Adventure is rushing out of someone’s room.]

*

“That is...! I am sorry, but my swordsmanship is... not something I can teach to an outsider...”

It seemed there was some secrecy involved in his swordsmanship.

That's disappointing.

“Will you tell me after receiving a beating?”

“No. I'll just tell you.”

The knight panicked and responded promptly.

Afterwards, he started explaining.

You should have done that from the start.

The mercenary looked dumbfounded, doubting if this man was really a knight. However, both the knight and I ignored the mercenary.

It's good, so it is all good.

Eyes sparkling, the knight began his passionate lecture about his swordsmanship.

Starting with the basics, he explained while including his personal preferences and experiences.

It was a passionate lecture that grew from a small desire to avoid getting beat up and his strong desire to blabber mouth.

I didn't know what was the average swordsmanship level of this world. However, I could easily tell that the contents of the knight's lecture were definitely not on an amateur level.

He didn't just talk about the basic swordsmanship. He also explained the meanings of the movements, their applications, and methods which were high level information.

Now, he was explaining in detail about things that I didn't even ask. Looking at the man, the mercenary's face was completely .

He was thinking, 'didn't you say it is a secret?'

Although the mercenary and the adventurer found the knight's behavior to be ridiculous for a while, they eventually joined me and actively listened to the man's lecture.

It was an extraordinarily high-quality lecture.

"We should have asked you to tell us about your swordsmanship sooner."

Compared to some random story he told us about some master craftsman of dining utensils starting a family with a widow from some family, this is far more useful and educational.

I wondered if this man was born to be a storyteller who ended up becoming a knight instead. Anyway, I think he would be perfect as a swordsmanship teacher.

He explained things in detail interestingly, so it was easy to understand.

Because he was also a skilled swordsman, he explained the moves by executing them in front of us, so his lectures were even more effective.

I think I should have a duel with him later and have him teach me all of his moves.

Judging from the knight's attitude, I don't think he will say no.

"Explain the move you used yesterday too. The one where you focused your mana to the sword."

"Yes!"

Before long, he was selling off his super move, which could be considered as the life itself of a knight.

However, it seemed the man had forgotten his words earlier about his swordsmanship being a secret to outsiders. He was only focused on explaining the technique.

“Isn’t the Empire going to come after us if we hear this?”

“Who is going to know that we know if we keep our mouths shut?”

I calmed the mercenary who was concerned about this and directed my focus at the knight again.

It seemed the mercenary was also interested in hearing the explanation, so he didn’t try to trip up the knight.

Meanwhile, the knight seemed unaware that he was leaking a critical information. He started explaining excitedly.

“The key is efficiently concentrating mana on to the sword.”

From what I have observed, it seemed like you gave away the efficiency to your family’s dog.

“Even with all of the mana focused on the sword, it is a difficult feat to achieve visible formation with it. So, you need to minimize the waste and efficiently pour in mana to the sword. First, if you look at the wrist area... You know all about the mana circuit’s pathways, right?”

“No. I don’t know about that very well. I only know about the heart and left shoulder areas.”

The adventurer said he didn't know much about it, so the knight kindly explained the mana circuit pathways.

It was very interesting.

The pathways that the knight described were not the conventional ones.

The pathways through the wrist and palm completely different.

In addition to the mana circuit pathways, the knight also explained the methods for using the technique.

After hearing the explanations, I brought out a great sword and tried it out. My mana waste definitely streamlined, to a greater degree than I thought.

I think it will be useful when operating a smaller amount of mana in addition to pouring great amount of mana to the sword.

[You acquired Mana Circuit Lv. 16]

Wow...

“Sir Apostle... I think what the knight just described was a secret

royal mana utilization technique. If it becomes known that we heard it, not just that knight, but all of us will be hunted down and executed.”

That would be bad.

Who is going to know if the group keeps their mouth shut? However, that knight is probably be able to keep this a secret.

He will run his mouth off somewhere and tell people that he told us about the secret technique.

Of course, I don't give a damn.

I ignored the mercenary and continued to ask the knight.

“I agree that the mana circuit utilization is very creative and efficient. However, don't you think this technique is too difficult to use in a real combat? The opponent would either run away or attack you while you prepare the technique. Also, instead of focusing such huge amount of mana to the sword, it would be better to use it by spreading your mana into the surrounding.”

“What are you talking about, Sir Apostle? This technique is incredibly useful in real combat. Most small fries bow down when it is used once. Also, it is really stylish. Don't you think it would be great to exhibit your power to the higher ups?”

“I agree. This technique is used more often than other

complicated swordplay. Its power is proven too. The position of a knight within the Order of Knights changes depending on the mastery of this technique.”

Ah, so it is for just showing off one’s power and looking stylish.

For knights, who are not warriors, I guess it would be useful.

Actually, how many people would be living their lives like I do, always being in middle of deadly battles?

The technique is probably extremely useful for knights who reached high levels like this man.

It could be used to convince the opponent to surrender. It was also stylish and powerful. I think it is the most important skill to have for the knights.

It would be useful to show off in front of the nobilities and for ceremonies.

Also, knights would have subordinates or comrades with them at all times, so they don’t have to worry about being attacked while preparing the technique.

I understood what it was for.

The knight’s swordsmanship lectures continued through the

lunch and even the dinner time. The lectures were very useful.

In particular, the mana pathways he described were unnatural paths. This was a priceless information.

In the past, I never once thought about making the mana flow through paths outside their designated passages.

There was a lot to learn from the swordsmanship itself as well.

I learned swordsmanship from swinging the sword in battle for survival and roughly improved based on the spear techniques I learned from Idy.

The depth of my knowledge in swordsmanship was completely different from the swordsmanship of the knight which was taught, used and improved upon through many generations for decades. It was incomparable.

I think it will be very helpful just to think about the meaning of individual movements of the techniques and studying them.

Thanks to the knight, now I have a lot of homework to do.

I brought out dinner from the dimensional bag.

There was someone missing in the dinner table, so I looked around. The holy knight was healing the mage who was lying on

the ground.

If the mage does not wake up tonight, I think I should use the Elixir.

I don't know about the other people, but I have so much I want to hear from the mage.

“That man sure have a good heart.”

The mercenary said that. I turned to look at him.

“You know. During the battle yesterday, that mage used his magic even though the holy knight was within the effective area. Despite this, that man is taking such a good care of the mage. I think it is odd, so...”

I think so too.

When the mage shot the fireball at me, the holy knight was inside the area of effect, and he was utterly defenseless on the ground.

If I just avoided the fireball, the holy knight would have burned to crisp and died.

Afterwards, after raising the barrier, he didn't give a damn about the adventurer and the knight who were collapsed on the ground

outside of the barrier. The mage just continued to recite the spell to prepare the next magic which would have killed everyone outside the barrier.

Um...

Personally, I am most suspicious of the mage. He might be the doppelganger.

He did everything so far to fight me, but ultimately, he put not only my life but others' lives in danger as well.

The doppelganger's goal is to kill as much people in this dungeon as much as possible before being discovered. His behaviors so far align with that goal.

Still, I cannot be certain if he is the doppelganger either.

The knight over there is holding the adventurer hostage to his blather mouthing. I think the knight is suspicious too.

No, he is very suspicious.

I'm so suspicious of him that I would say in a calm voice 'I knew you were the doppelganger' if the knight revealed himself to be the doppelganger later.

As for the adventurer... I just don't like this bastard. He looks like

the doppelganger just because I hate him.

I cannot exclude the mercenary either.

Whenever anyone showed suspicious behaviors, he whispered to me about it.

Also, the mercenary was inside the barrier. He was closely acquainted with the adventurer, yet that didn't stop him from deciding to sacrifice the adventurer.

The holy knight seemed to be the most unlikely character to be the doppelganger. He is maintaining conventional behaviors and benevolent attitude. However, I have some doubts about this man as well.

Um...

Well, it is probably all right if I think about this later.

I still have six days left.

My priority is gathering information, not finding the doppelganger.

I organized my thoughts and approached the holy knight and the mage at the corner.

I was about to tell the holy knight that the dinner was ready. However, I noticed something strange.

Sitting on the ground, the holy knight had his hand on the mage's stomach and was using the holy power. The mage was laying down, limp.

The problem was the mage.

I didn't notice this before. The mage had long hair... and the curves of the body protruding under the clothing...

“A woman?”

Chapter 98 - Tutorial 16th Floor (6)

“She is a woman. She must have been hiding her gender using the her magic or some kind of artifact.”

... Why are you saying it so casually?

You didn't even tell others that the mage was a woman. You had been looking after her with the excuse of tending to her wounds.

If this was the modern world, you would have been accused of being a sexual predator.

“... Who do you think I am. You are not even trying to hide your suspicions. It is unpleasant, so please don't make a face like that.”

The mage was a woman with eye-catching long curly hair.

“Anyway, isn't she too young? I think someone said she is the head of some Magic Tower. How could someone so young be in a position like that?”

I am not so surprised about the fact that the mage was hiding her true self.

She is a mage, so she could. I can understand that.

However, she looks too young.

She isn't just a little young. I think she is younger than me.

“I think she is the pupil of the Maruathen Magic Tower's head. It seems she was disguised as the head of the Magic Tower and sent in here.”

Before we reached a conclusion, the knight came by and said that.

“Pupil?”

“Yes. I have no way of knowing why. Perhaps it was because the Magic Tower's head is very old. Maybe it was a matter of health.”

“But the disguise earlier didn't look all that old either?”

“That was also just an embellishment. The Magic Tower's head is actually over hundred years old. That's what I heard.”

That's really old.

After he heard us talking, the mercenary came by. He whistled and said,

“She is quite the beauty. Mr. Holy knight, were you having fun here by yourself?”

Having heard what the mercenary said, the holy knight shouted,

“ *! * . *!”

What is he saying?

“What are you saying?”

“He was swearing curses. When people of holy professions must swear out of circumstance, they use this ancient forgotten language. That’s what I heard. I don’t know the meaning either.”

Thanks to the knight’s explanation, I got to at least figure out the essence of what the holy knight just spewed out.

Swearing using an ancient civilization’s language...

Is it impossible to translate even with the power of the knowledge, even before the time of Babel? Maybe it is because the skill’s level is not high enough yet.

“Ah, oh my. I apologize, so please don’t be so angry. I was just joking. Aren’t you overreacting? Even though you are a man of religion, still...”

The holy knight was not able to calm his anger immediately. He grabbed hold of the mercenary and lectured him for a long time.

The mercenary was starting to get frustrated before the lecture finally ended.

Afterwards, grabbing the holy knight's shoulder, the knight said,

“From now on, we should not approach this mage as much as possible. I understand that you stayed around her to heal her, but that was too dangerous. From now on, unless everyone is watching, don't approach her alone.”

“... I got it.”

The holy knight agreed to the knight's suggestion.

The response is rather calm for someone who was just angry for being suspected of indecency.

It seemed the knight read the puzzled look on my face. The knight explained again,

“I am not saying this just because she is the only woman in this dungeon. Showing consideration for a lady who is trapped here with men is only obvious. However, there is a doppelganger in this place. You must not forget this fact.”

“I don't understand. What does doppelganger have to do with her?”

Ah, you don't know this. It is like this: what do you think will happen if a doppelganger assumed a human form and forms an intimate relationship with someone of the opposite gender?"

"What happens?"

"A life will be conceived. It won't matter if the doppelganger was the man or the woman. The conceived child will be born with the appearance of a human being. However, the child will be born inheriting the doppelganger's existence and the abilities. The child will be even more dangerous because it will be able to assume the human form without stealing another person's appearance. Also, as a way of survival and to increase their numbers, the doppelganger will actively attract the opposite gender."

... It really is dangerous.

The danger rating for the doppelganger skyrocketed in my head.

I thought about a scenario.

A doppelganger in human form marries a human and gives birth to children.

The children will grow up and marry other humans, giving birth to more children.

After this pattern repeats for a few generations, it won't be long before a small village would be full of doppelgangers.

Like that, as the doppelgangers increase in their numbers to the point where most of the population could be doppelgangers.

Everyone agreed to do as the knight said. Slightly anxious, we had our dinner.

The next morning, the mage woke up.

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It was during the third day since the 16th Floor's stage started.

I was preparing the breakfast, and the mage woke up.

The mage screamed in pain as soon as she woke up, and the holy knight rushed to treat her.

Her mana ran amok because her focus was interrupted in middle of casting a spell, so the damage was more substantial than I ever imagined.

After the pain was relieved, the holy knight gave a short summary of what happened so far.

The mage was panicking about the fact that her true appearance was revealed more than over the contents of the summary.

We told her it was all right, but she panicked and tried to use magic.

Perhaps due to the internal injuries, her magic failed.

She was very conscious about the fact that her appearance was revealed.

I was curious why she was acting like that. I figured that I might as well ask her to talk about herself so I can get the answer her answer.

Surprisingly, the mage barely said anything.

She only spoke in few terse words. When she said long sentences, she wrote them on the notepad she had in her bag.

Because of this, to listen to her stories, we had to invest a large amount of time.

“So, you are saying you disguised yourself as a man ever since your childhood? Why?”

According to her, ever since she became a mage, she had been living under the disguise of a man.

She said she was asked to come to the dungeon as a double for the head of the Magic Tower because she was used to acting due to her experience.

The mercenary found her explanation questionable, so the mage started to diligently write something in response. Meanwhile, the knight stepped in.

“I heard that there are quite a lot of female mages who hide their feminine identity. There is no gender-based limitation on mastering magic. However, magic itself is an exclusive tradition of the nobilities. In the past, only males were allowed to master magic. The custom had been mitigated quite a bit now. However, conservative mages still don't take kindly of talented female mages. Instead of facing such discrimination, I heard that female mages just live under the male disguise. In her case, she was talented and powerful enough to act as a double for the head of the Magic Tower, so she was probably under the same circumstance. I heard that the female mages first receive the disguise magic or artifact from the teachers and use their own magic power to keep up the disguise once they grow up. In her case, she probably received the help from the head of the Magic Tower. From social standpoint, it is a great misfortune for a woman to hide her feminine identity for the rest of her life. However, mages are not like the most people. The mages are not interested in dating, marriage or having and raising children, so I heard they make this kind of choice often.”

As usual, that was a great explanation.

I wonder if there is a way to have this man tag along with me at all times?

Like a Pokemon inside a Pokeball.

It seemed everything was as the knight just explained. The mage nodded in agreement to the knight's explanation.

After hearing the explanation, I wanted to ask her to teach me magic. However, the holy knight strongly advised me against it.

He said she needed more rest because she had been unconscious for two days. So, I decided to wait a bit longer.

With the time left, I made a changing room and a restroom at the corner of the dungeon.

While it was just among men, we didn't care. We just went to a corner to change clothes or take care of our businesses. Now that we had a woman, we needed a blind for her.

*

We finished eating lunch and all of us sat at the center of the dungeon room.

It was the time for the chatterbox knight to continue. Now, this became a regular event after meals.

I brought out crackers and snacked on it while listening to the knight.

Calling it a simple blabber mouthing didn't do justice to the man's ability. It was closer to a stage performance.

The knight was like a stage actor. He told the story along with exaggerated movements.

His story was quite interesting, so everyone tuned into the man's story.

While the knight was giving realistic portrayal of the princess he saw at the coronation, I directed my gaze away and looked at the holy knight and the mage.

They were sitting right next to each other. Something was odd.

They looked too close.

It was as if they had known each other from before.

They became too close too fast.

It had not been that long since the mage woke up. It was just from the morning to the lunch time. It had only been a few hours.

Of course, it was the holy knight who treated the mage while she was unconscious. I could understand that she would be thankful to the holy knight.

Also, if they are good fit to each other, they could become close easily.

However, we are inside a sealed room with a doppelganger. Is it still normal for people to become so close and so quickly?

I don't know the customs or common sense of the people in this world, so I am not sure if I should bring this up to the people or not.

No matter how I think about it, it is strange.

Let's organize my thoughts on this.

If I start with how the battle went during the first day, the friendly atmosphere between the two is strange.

First, when the holy knight and I were in the path of the fireball's effective area, the mage launched it without hesitation.

If I didn't block it using Talaria's Wings, the flame would have engulfed both me and the holy knight.

Afterwards, the mage fainted from being struck by me, and the holy knight healed her.

When she lost consciousness again because her mana ran amok, the holy knight healed her again.

From the mage's perspective, I guess this will be complicated.

She must be surprised. I bet she feels guilty about it and even thankful.

Is she being friendly with the holy knight because she feels sorry?

Um...

This is difficult to figure out.

My doubts never went away because I had suspicions about the holy knight's attitude since yesterday.

Since the battle yesterday, the holy knight was pristine example of moral righteousness.

He intentionally sought to create friendly atmosphere for everyone to get along and talk comfortably.

Honestly, his behaviors were in line with my goal of hearing

stories from everyone, so I didn't mind it so much.

However, before the battle, the holy knight was concerned about eradicating the doppelganger more than anyone.

He guided the mood toward violence and anxiety. Instead of calmly talking about it while resting, he insisted on finding and killing the doppelganger immediately.

His attitude now was different from back then. Something didn't look right.

There definitely was a doppelganger amongst us in this dungeon room. How could he afford to act so altruistically?

Of all people, he was the one who was most concerned about the doppelganger, so why is he doing this?

The following was my theory.

Initially, he intentionally created violent mood and caused splits among the people to cause chaos.

During the battle, he acted selflessly to erase the suspicion in people's hearts and gain potential supporters.

Assuming the holy knight is the doppelganger, the two were aligning with his goal.

In this situation, I had plenty of reasons to think something was odd about the fact that the holy knight and the mage were becoming close so fast.

Just like the holy knight, the mage was also a strong suspect for being the doppelganger.

From her perspective, the holy knight was a generous man and also a tool she could take advantage of. Becoming close with him was going to benefit her survival.

One last thing...

From the stage's description, there was nothing about there being just one doppelganger.

This is Hell Difficulty, so I need to consider the possibility that there could be two doppelgangers.

I think I should watch the holy knight and the mage closely.

After I organized the thoughts, I remembered the God of Adventure's response when my gaze ran into that of the mage.

What was the God of Adventure's response?

At that moment, I was certain that...

[The God of Adventure is highly entertained while watching you.]

That was the response.

What's so entertaining to watch?

[God of Adventure is rooting for you.]

I don't need it.

*

I asked the mage to teach me magic as soon as the dinner was over.

I waited long enough.

I only had four days left until the stage was over.

Even if it was going to be a little bit, I wanted to learn magic from her. I could not afford to wait any longer.

“Impossible.”

[It is forbidden to teach magic to an outsider. A mage can teach only teach magic to pupils of the Magic Tower.]

The mage let me know in both spoken and written words that she could not teach me magic.

Yep. I knew you would say that.

People tend to not listen when asked politely.

In this circumstance when nothing can be helped, I will be using a way that is not so polite, so it is quite regrettable.

Chapter 99 - Tutorial 16th Floor (7)

I added a flavor of threat to my demand, and the mage quickly changed her attitude. Reluctantly, she started to teach me magic.

The knight was watching the situation from the side. He joined and convinced the mage to teach me magic. His persuasion played a large role in convincing her.

The knight passionately convinced the mage.

He kindly explained why teaching me magic willingly would be good for her health.

Listening to knight explaining it all to the mage, I felt like I was a scum of the Earth and a violent thug who had gone all the way to the ultimate extreme of the villainy.

I already had threatened her earlier, so I couldn't even deny it.

Anyway, the knight's exaggerated description of me convinced the mage to give up on the idea of holding out without teaching me magic.

Also, my magic abilities were not even at the level of the beginner.

It was better to assume I knew absolutely nothing about magic.

What she had to teach me were the basics of the basics. Hence, the content was not going to be any different from the very basic education that would have been given by any other magic towers out there.

Thanks to this, the mage didn't have to worry so much about the potential punishment from her Magic Tower. With lightened heart, she decided to teach me magic.

The mage started with the theories behind the magic and mana.

There were two problems with the lectures.

First, instead of describing things through speech, she was writing things on the notepad instead to explain. The second problem was that I could not read her language.

The mage's writing mixed and matched various different languages and special symbols.

Despite the translator ability from the knowledge before the time of Babel, there was a definite limit.

This might be a different story if my level on the skill was higher. Regardless, for now, it was difficult for me to fully comprehend the mage's writings.

I asked the knight to help me decipher the writings. However, there were words that even the knight could not read.

In the end, we thought hard to figure out the words in the middle of sentences here and there.

Soon, we gave up.

“How long will it take to learn all these linguistic characters?”

[It will take about a year.]

She may as well have been writing the passages from Iliad without teaching me the ancient Greek language first.

Still, I could not afford to study these linguistic characters.

I only had four days left until the stage was over.

I also could not afford to camp out and repeat the 16th Floor for a year.

“Just skip the theories and tell me how to activate the magic. Teach me the simplest and easiest one to master.”

The mage said she will teach me a magic known as a wind arrow.

First, she explained the basic theory about the mana's type and how to endow the mana with that elemental type.

Afterwards, we gave up again.

The basic theory behind elemental magic was too difficult.

Even when I barely managed to read the writing, I could not exactly understand the meaning.

Instead of calling it a scholastic study, the sentences were like words from a monk who trained through meditation.

The sentences were excessively condensed and philosophical.

“Usually, how long does it take for people to master this magic?”

[Talent can factor in, but half a year at least.]

“How long did it take you?”

[Half a year.]

“How long does it take on average?”

[A little over five years...]

The mage was a little embarrassed to say it.

What the hell is this? Is she boasting?

Is this one of those situations where the answer is already set and I just need to say the answer the person is expecting me to say? Should I praise you and say you are super talented?

“... Let’s skip all that and get to the actual practice. The real thing.”

The mage didn’t like the idea, but she didn’t complain. She promptly told me about the method of mana operation, the spell and the hand sign.

I could not comprehend the spell at all; I didn’t even understand a single letter.

It seemed the knowledge before the time of Babel is completely useless here.

All the words I could not comprehend in middle of the theory lectures seemed to be of the same language used in the spell.

Is it like an ancient language exempted from knowledge before the time of the Babel? Should I understand it as something like a machine language for a computer?

I could not be certain. However, I remained hopeful that I might be able to use this one day if I memorized the spell and the hand sign, so I thoroughly memorized it.

Afterwards, I sat at a corner for a while, recited the spell and tried out the hand sign as I operated the mana in the way the mage explained.

When operating the mana, the most important parts were the heart, mouth and hand.

The heart was the mana circuit's center in the body. When the heart emanated mana, it had to be flown through a specific path.

While that happened, I had to recite the spell to form the desired construct.

Honestly, this last part was the one I understood the least.

Anyway, I tried it as instructed.

Surprisingly, just from reciting the spell, I could feel the mana being spent and disappearing around my mouth.

Does the spell itself have a special effect?

At the final stage, I spoke the activation words and focused mana

in my hand.

She said I didn't need to use the hand for focusing mana.

However, since most magic were used through the hand or a staff that helped the discharge of the mana, she said the hand was used for the purpose of focusing mana.

Now, once I expel the focused mana to the outside, the magic spell will be complete.

“Wind Arrow.”

Of course, nothing happened.

I smacked my lips out of disappointment.

What I lacked was comprehension of the process.

I was lacking comprehension of the mana operation and the elemental-type characteristics that the mage was trying to teach me.

I've been handling mana for a long time, so when it comes to the mana operation I think I can cover it somewhat.

The problem is the characteristics of elemental-type magic.

Since the magic is wind arrow, it must be a wind elemental type.

The problem is how to endow this element into the magic.

... How would I know?

I opened my eyes. The mage was looking at me, surprised.

She quickly wrote something and said,

“Genius?”

[I never expected you to succeed in activating it already. You really never studied magic before?]

Really?

That just now was a success?

I asked the mage. She said it was not like I activated the magic perfectly, but she also said it would take two to three years of constant study since childhood to achieve what I just did.

[If you are interested in learning magic, please visit our Magic Tower.]

I am sorry, but that will not be possible.

Anyway, I properly used the spell and the hand sign. Apparently, my ability to operate mana was decent too.

Honestly, I was confident about handling mana.

Except when sleeping, I had been running mana circuit all the time, even when I'm eating or taking a dump.

I had utilized it in various ways for combat too.

I worked hard, but I had been thinking I am exceptionally good with my method of handling mana.

Because I had such confidence, I bluntly asked her to tell me the usage instruction first.

However, I could not resolve the problems I ran into with the elemental type.

I asked her to explain to me about the elemental type, the wind type in particular.

Of course, I couldn't understand it.

The sun rose up for the fifth day.

Well, since we are inside a sealed dungeon room, I guess that would be a weird way to put it.

Anyway, the morning came.

“I’m sure everyone had the same experience I had. The narrow pathway was big enough for one person to barely pass through. I had no choice but to take off my armor and crawl through it with just a sword like this. The pathway became narrower as I went in further, to the point where I had difficulty just crawling. There were comrades of my Order of Knights who were following behind me, but... I am worried if they were crushed by the ceiling when it collapsed.”

“I’m sure they are fine. From where I was, the trap’s mechanism was exposed, so I can say this with certainty. The ceiling inside the dungeon collapsed, but on the outside, only the wall is blocking the path.”

As usual, we ate breakfast and gathered around to talk about junk.

It was very interesting to hear about the group’s story regarding how they searched the dungeon for the rumored treasure as if they were on a competition.

To find the hidden pathway, they fought each other and eventually made amends and decided to collaborate. The process sounded like a scene from a fantasy novel.

In the end, they found the hidden pathway inside the dungeon. When the pathway eventually split to several directions, the group split up as well.

Although they all went their separate ways through these different pathways, as if it was by magic, they all arrived in this dungeon room at the same time and fell into the trap.

The story is like a game.

It had been a while since I questioned the background setting of a Tutorial's stage.

Is this an artificial situation created by the architect of the Tutorial? To assume that, the memories that these people have are too detailed and vast.

To put it simply, for a seven-day stage, the appearing characters have too many and too detailed settings.

I wonder, when I will be able to resolve this curiosity?

Perhaps I will never get the answer.

There was a bitter taste in my mouth.

I drank a sip of water and looked around.

Afterwards, I said as If I was spitting it out,

“Aren’t you guys all being too relaxed?”

Having heard what I said, everyone turned to look at me.

On the surface, they looked rather leisure.

Could it be that they forgot about the fact that there is a doppelganger hiding here and we need to hunt it because the daily routines?

Everyone’s face looked uncomfortable when I pointed this out.

It was not that they forgot. I see now.

They looked like students who were certain about failing the test that they were supposed to take soon. Because they were certain about failing the test, they didn’t bother with studying for it, and instead, they played around until the very last day before the test. The group had the same look as students in such a situation.

They were just hiding the anxiety inside.

“I told all of you this before. There is a way to resolve the problem even if we don’t find the doppelganger until the very last day, and that method is taking turns beating the crap out of one person until the doppelganger shows itself.”

Now, the uncomfortable faces changed to anxious faces.

“Come on. I’m not saying this because I don’t like everyone getting along so well. It’s good that everyone is being friendly with each other. I like that too. Still, we need to hunt down the doppelganger. If possible, I would like to minimize the amount of blood on my hands.”

Still, it was not like there was a way to find the doppelganger. I was just pressuring them to find the doppelganger because they were going to pay in blood soon.

I was the one who intentionally brought about such friendly atmosphere. Now, I was saying thing like this. I didn’t want to say it. Still, we really had to find the doppelganger now.

We only have two days left until the rescue party arrives and the 16th Floor’s stage ends.

“Km... The fact that we have no way of identifying the doppelganger is the problem, isn’t it? Km... Mr. Apostle, in that case, how about we try the method you mentioned last time? What was that... [Mabia](#) game or what not.”

The mercenary mentioned the Mafia game.

“You mean Mafia game? I proposed that just because I wanted to hear information from everyone.”

“Still, I can’t think of any other way, so what do we do?”

Everyone agreed to the mercenary’s idea.

There was no basis to claim that the doppelganger could be identified by playing the Mafia game. However, it was not like we had any other idea.

Like that, the Mafia game started.

*

About one hour passed since we started the game.

“What the! Damn it! Why are you saying I’m suspicious? Huh? You think you can say anything you want because you have an open mouth? You should say stuff that makes sense. This bullcrap...”

The dungeon used to be in tranquil and amiable place. However, it was now thrown in chaos.

“Even so, there is no proof to say that you are not the doppelganger.”

“What? Damn it. Are you all accusing me?”

“Please cool your temper. Collecting thoughts after a calm conversation may not be enough as it is. Why are you being so temperamental?”

“Seriously. They are accusing me of being a demon and framing me. How could I stay calm! Mr. Holy knight, aren't you are suspicious too?”

“Anyway, that mage is the most dubious one. Do you realize how many could have died as casualties of her spells?”

“Baseless speculation.”

[That's an excessive criticism. We were in middle of a battle. Why are you casting doubts on people based on insufficient evidence? Adventurer, by any chance, are you the doppelganger?]

“Honestly, I am doubting the mercenary a little. He is only showing outlandish reactions. They say that overdone denial is an affirmation. I don't remember where I heard it, but that's how it is. The same can be said about the holy knight. There were a few questionable things about his attitude for the past seven days. He didn't let us know when the mage turned out to be a lady. Of

course, the most suspicious one here is the mage. I am not saying this because I almost died by her magic. It is definitely not that. Of the people in this dungeon right now, four people could have been hurt by her magic. If they were attacked, there would have been just the holy knight, the mage and the mercenary left. Isn't that a great situation for the doppelganger?"

Meanwhile, the knight was bubbling with his obsessive compulsive explanation disorder potential.

"Would you shut the hell up!? I think you are the most suspicious one!"

"Agreed!"

Oh my, this is a complete mess; it's as if a dog full of mud-stains came in and ran around wild.

I'm starting to think it would be more peaceful to beat the shit out of them all one at a time until the doppelganger reveals itself.

However, because there is no guarantee that there really is just one doppelganger, it is a choice that is hard for me to accept.

Even if one doppelganger is discovered, as long as there is the possibility of another one, I need to beat the entire group to pulp.

I cannot leave any exception.

I didn't like doing that, so I handed the problem over for the group to figure out, yet...

“Are you picking a fight here?!”

“That's right, let's go at it! Draw your sword you bastard!”

“Warning! Warning!”

“Lower your sword at once!?”

“Old man, why don't you lower your sword!”

I wonder if this is how it would feel to experience a soap opera in real life? I pondered about this for a moment and decided.

I don't think the situation would improve even if I interfered.

I will be able to put a stop to this chaos, but the situation will just go back to the beginning.

First, I should just wait until they come to a conclusion on their own.

I thought it would be better if I just stayed out of this. I went to a corner and practiced magic.

I thought I won't be able to focus if I hear them talk, so I intentionally blocked my hearing.

While they argued, I spent the time while practicing magic, but I could feel someone approaching.

I immediately opened my eyes and looked forward to see the entire group was there to staring at me.

“What the? Did you guys finish fighting?”

“Um? You couldn't hear us? That's an incredible focus. Um... About that...”

It seemed the holy knight had something to say, but it was hard for him to say it.

So, I looked at the knight.

Organize it for me, Mr. Compulsive explanation disorder patient!

What is it?

Feeling my gaze, the knight seemed to panic. He tumbled around for a moment.

However, it seemed he realized his role soon. He opened his mouth and started to explain.

“We spent the past two hours and succeeded in gathering our thoughts, although there were lots of arguments and fights in the process. We decided on the person who we thought was the most likely one to be the doppelganger.”

Oh, from that chaos, you guys came to a unanimous decision?

“Who is it?”

The knight paused for a moment. It was like a scene from a court drama with a surprise verdict. He raised his index finger and shouted,

“Mr. Apostle, it is you!”

“What?”

[TL: Misspelling of Mafia to Mabilia is intentional.]

Chapter 100 - Tutorial 16th Floor (8)

“Mr. Apostle, it is you!”

“What?”

This was totally unexpected. It made my head numb momentarily.

In that chaos, you guys came to a decision; that conclusion was that I am the doppelganger?

Are these guys nuts?

“We came to the conclusion that you must be the doppelganger. So...”

[Soul Steal]

First, I used the Soul Steal and assumed combat stance.

I was not panicking. I just found it ridiculous.

I’m sure the knight will explain, as usual.

He will explain how they came to the decision.

I'm sure he will kindly go over each and every reason.

However, before that...

I'll hear their explanation after a beating.

[Blink]

First, I used Blink and moved to the middle of the group.

[Talaria's Wings]

The wings were spread open, and the Knight and the Mercenary were struck by the motion. They were thrown to the back.

As usual, I need to target the Mage first.

It seemed she was already aware that I was going to target her first. She cast a barrier in front of her to block me.

Is it the same one I saw the last time?

I looked at the floor. She even had the magic circles drawn already.

Inside the barrier, the Mage was reciting the spell.

It is the same pattern as the last time.

However, this time, I bet she isn't casting a magic that would fail with a trivial interference.

It seemed she was not concerned about me at all because I was outside of the barrier. She even closed her eyes as she was reciting the spell.

She must be pretty confident about the barrier's defensive power.

Let's see just how powerful your barrier is.

I focused mana at my fist. With all of my strength, I struck the barrier's surface.

Kwaaaang!

The barrier and my fist collided and generated a deafening shockwave. The Adventurer was trying to sneak up on me from the side, but he was pushed back and fell because of the shockwave.

The Adventurer was on the ground and defenseless, but I took a step back from the barrier instead of minding the man.

It developed a crack.

I can see a spider web of cracks emanating from the center of where my fist hit.

I need to aim for that area and deal a huge blow. That will do it.

I brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms and formed a hammer.

Unlike other high-floor challengers of Tutorial, I don't have a certain kill or ultimate move. That's because most of the skills I have are passive or long-duration skills.

If I had to have one, then the body slam with Talaria's Wings and Blink would be it.

However, that body slam move is too risky.

If I collided with the opponent by wrapping myself in Talaria's Wings and using Blink, although Talaria's Wings will protect my body, there will be a brutal shock from the impact.

If the opponent does not budge from the impact at all, then I'll be experiencing the shock of the impact coming back at me.

To reduce this risk, I came up with the idea of using Blink while swinging a weapon.

I successfully used this for the first time against Idy at the Fifth Floor. I had been practicing this technique diligently since then.

I maximized my mana, wrapped it around my body and focused.

The most important thing in this technique was timing.

I had to use the Blink at the right time, or I was not going to be able to deliver the momentum from the weapon's swing properly.

I held the hammer like a baseball bat.

The hammer's handle grip was formed from a type of metal that was different from the rest.

I could feel its rough texture. I won't have to worry about the hammer slipping out of my hand so easily.

As I practiced before, I adjusted into a baseball batter's stance.

After that, I swung the hammer.

I was able to swing the hammer smoothly. The motion was smooth and fluid.

The hammer was swung following a specific trajectory that I set. Before it reached the strike point, I used Blink.

[Blink]

A loud, violent noise filled the dungeon once again.

Instead of saying it was a sound that resulted from a clash, it was closer the sound of an explosion.

Actually, when the hammer and the barrier collided, there was an explosion of mana.

Because of the explosion, there was an intense light, and I automatically winced, closing my eyes.

It took me a while before I was able to open my eyes to check the aftermath.

The Transmutable Thousand Arms was rolling on the floor.

It seemed that I lost my grip during the impact.

My head is cloudy.

I cannot hear anything. Is it because I encountered such a loud noise so close?

Even though I wrapped my body in mana to prepare for the

impact?

My hand was completely broken. It was drenched in blood.

There were blood leaking out of gaps in my nails. My hand, wrist and arm muscles were twitching violently.

Although they were not visible, I was betting that my joints were not in good condition either.

Other than those... My back was hurting a little. The right side of my pelvis was hurting.

My wing bone behind the shoulder is hurting too.

Well, this is not bad.

I have not been hurt in a while, but this is not something I should be surprised about.

The barrier was completely shattered.

The Mage inside the barrier was unconscious. As for the others, it seemed they were still unable to shake off the shock. They were all on the ground and rubbing their eyes or rolling around in a daze.

Ugh. I didn't think there would be an explosion when the barrier

breaks.

Since it is a magic spell, did the mana contained within the barrier explode when it was destroyed?

I don't know how a barrier works, so I have no way of knowing.

I sustained more damage than I thought.

This clearly shows the drawback of the attack using Blink.

The recoil won't be so bad if the opponent gets thrown off or just explodes immediately, but if the subject withstands the impact for even a little bit, I experience the recoil.

I think I should refrain from using this method with a blunt weapon, especially in a batting stance.

To start with, I started practicing this technique with intent of using it with a sword to improve a swing's ability to cut through things.

The technique is not suited for blunt-strike annihilation. It is better for cutting with a powerful blade swing.

I rotated my wrist around to relax it.

Ah, my ankles are hurting too.

After a while, I could hear the beeping noises in my ears. I gradually regained my hearing ability.

The rubble of the shattered barrier were like broken glasses on the floor. Starting with the smallest parts, the rubbles became fainter, and they all disappeared into the air.

Around that time, the group finally regained their senses.

Of them all, the knight got a grip first and got up.

As I thought, he is the strongest of the group.

I picked up the Transmutable Thousand Arms that was currently in the form of a hammer and walked to the Knight.

“Uu... My head... Uh!? Wait... Wait! I... I surrender. Surrender!”

Stop making noises, you knight bastard.

Receive a beating first. We will talk later.

You don't have to feel like you were wronged.

Other than the Mage, who was unconscious, everyone is going to

take turn to receive beatings, including that Adventurer over there who is lying down and pretending to be unconscious. Every last one of you.

*

“Come on. Why are you crying? You are making me feel sorry for beating you.”

This is awkward.

The Adventurer was crying non-stop for a long time now.

You are a grown middle-aged man. Why are you making a scene and crying?

“Come on, why... Uhhhuuk...”

I won't describe the pitiful cries that followed afterwards.

“Why... Why are you beating me harder than everyone else.”

Ah, so that's why you felt wronged.

You know, there are people you just hate.

To me, the Adventurer was one of those people.

It was not like I had a personal ill feeling toward... Actually, I did have a personal ill feeling toward him.

I struck him ferociously in the pit of the stomach. Today, I gave him a good mix of beatings everywhere.

For the grand finale of the beating, I used my elbow to strike him along his back.

The Adventurer rolled on the ground in pain for a long time.

For a while, he was having a difficulty breathing. Now, he was crying.

Something must have happened to his spines. He was not able to sit or stand. He was just lying on the floor and crying.

This was a middle-aged man with an epic beard like [Jang-bi](#), yet he was acting so pathetic.

I felt like my eyes were rotting.

The others in the group shared similar reactions.

They were all rolling around the ground and struggling.

I turned my head and said to the knight,

“Explanation.”

“... I would have explained even if you asked before you attacked us...”

“Explanation.”

The Knight's face was swelled up because he was struck on the jaw. He started to explain.

If I punched harder as usual, I might have completely turned his jaw around.

He was holding the side of his waist. His pale face was cringing. His internal organ was most likely busted from the hammer impact.

The knight tried to speak, but he struggled due to pain. It seemed he was experiencing severe pain.

He was breathing heavily. His eyes turned up all the way and showing just whites. It seemed he had his feet inside the Styx.

I figured it could not be helped. I brought out a potion from the inventory and had him drink it.

Looking at this, the Adventurer looked even pitiful.

I ignored him.

After drinking the potion, the Knight was looking a little better, so I asked him to explain again.

“We had many reasons why we thought you must be the doppelganger. First, we had no idea how you got here or which pathway you took. Before the walls collapsed and the explosion brought down the ceiling, we saw numerous pathways. There probably were over ten different ones. We all came through one of these pathways. However, we could not figure out which pathway you came through to get here. We know the dungeon’s structures fairly well in detail. We had been exploring this place for a long time. Even if it is the pathway we had never been in before, considering the structure, there are plenty of dungeon rooms connected to the pathways. Still, even with those possibilities, we could not figure out how you got here. Second, you kept asking us for information. Clearly, you wanted to get information from us. Still, you didn’t ask at all about the members of the Order of Knights or their command structure or the members of the rescue party. You didn’t ask about information that the doppelganger needs. Also, you didn’t insist on us to answer about things we didn’t want to tell you. Of course, you did insist on us to teach you about swordsmanship and magic. Besides these, the information you wanted were mostly basic knowledge in this world.”

Too long...

Way too long...

It was not like he had a script in front of him to read from, yet he was saying them all in perfect order and logically too. The man has incredible talent.

“You can’t just use the interest in common knowledge as certain proof of someone being the doppelganger.”

“You are right. The doppelganger will get to have the knowledge of the person that it took possession of. However, if that person doesn’t know anything about the world, then the doppelganger will need to find out about the world outside. As you said, we can’t make the conclusion based on just that. We had a more definite proof. It was the fact that none of us saw you in the dungeon before this. There weren’t even any reports about you being seen by anyone. We had been exploring this dungeon for a long time together. The entrance was guarded by my comrades. There were many people around the pathways and large spaces. So, we theorized that you had been hiding here all this time, in this dungeon space to be precise. In that case, it made sense why you don’t know anything about the world.”

“And the being that had been in this dungeon all this time is the doppelganger?”

“Yes. That’s right.”

That’s a pretty convincing story.

Now, what should I do?

Wait.

They never talked about the time they ran into the doppelganger in detail.

The group told me so many stories.

Exploring the dungeon, going through the pathways to get to this place, and even the time when they were caught by a trap and unable to escape... they mentioned many things.

However, they never once described the doppelganger to me.

They didn't tell me about when they met the doppelganger either.

The message definitely said the group ran into the doppelganger.

However, they are saying now that I must be the doppelganger who was always here.

This is odd.

If they entered this place and saw me, then would they be able to say with certainty that I am the doppelganger?

He would just think that I was a human who was trapped in a hidden room.

After they entered this exact spot...

Now, again...

They must have ran into the doppelganger and confirmed its existence.

They never told me about this.

I didn't bother to ask about that moment all this time.

I didn't ask because I was not going to be able to answer if they asked me to describe that moment myself. I wanted to avoid being asked such a question.

I believed that the group got to this place through different pathways, confirmed the demon named doppelganger, and then fell to a trap where lost their sight inside the darkness.

In that chaos, someone was done in by the doppelganger, and the group was trapped here with the doppelganger that assumed the human form of one of the group.

There was no light when I entered the stage and everyone was scattered and moaning in pain. It was natural to assume the above.

However, listening to what the Knight said, it seemed that they never confirmed the doppelganger with their eyes.

If I was the doppelganger like the Knight said and if I had been hiding here all along, the group would have seen that I was the doppelganger when they first arrived.

AnchorPlus, as soon as they found light in the darkness they should have pointed me out as the doppelganger and attacked me.

However, none of them did.

The group, or the knight at least, had never seen the doppelganger.

However, the group was aware that there was a doppelganger in this dungeon.

I thought about this slowly to organize everything.

“In that case, how did you guys know there is a doppelganger in this place?”

“Pardon?”

“Someone must have told you that there is a doppelganger in this place, right? Who was the one that first mentioned that there was

doppelganger here?”

That person had to be most suspicious one.

This person was claiming there was a doppelganger, despite never having seen it.

“That was me...”

The knight panicked and stepped back as he said that.

[Jang-bi is one of the three brothers from the Romance of Three Kingdoms story. He is an ultra tough warrior with epic beard like many others in the story. Think Mr. T or Chuck Norris beard.]